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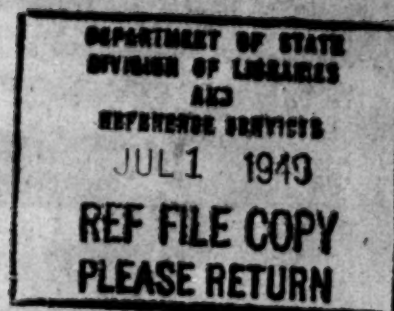
Dr. Treckling

By *W. B. Brown*

Date: *10-10-47*

THE DEPRESSED CLASSES OF INDIA

27 May 1943



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THE DEPRESSED CLASSES OF INDIA

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find passages in which the Aryan people are contrasted with the earlier population in respect to color, speech, religious practices, and physical features. Mention is made of four classes of society based on division of function, in addition to which are several groups described as degraded or despised. The most plausible interpretation of the material suggests that these last were groups of aborigines, though it is possible that some of them were composed of individuals of mixed descent for whom there was no place in the four classes.

For the period ending about the first century A.D. our information is more extensive. It is evident that by this time certain classes are definitely considered to be outcasts. They are called antyayasyin (those who dwell outside), and there exists additional proof that outcasts were segregated from the rest of the population. According to one source a class of people called Chandalas had to live beyond the burial grounds, and wells used by the general public were forbidden to them. The association of caste with hereditary occupation is well-defined and certain occupations are regarded as low while the castes engaged in them are of inferior status. The idea of untouchability is well-developed; outcasts, and specifically the Chandalas, by their touch or presence impart pollution to members of the first three castes.

The outstanding features which characterize the Depressed Classes in Hindu society today were evident in the eighth century A.D. Probably as a result of greater specialization of labor, the number of castes and sub-castes has increased, and each is associated with a hereditary occupation. Work is distinguished as pure or impure and the status of occupations fixed accordingly.

Among the outcaste groups are washermen, leather-workers, cane-workers and fishermen. One list of outcasts included the Bhils, a well-known aboriginal tribe of Central India. The Chandalas, previously mentioned only as a very low and degraded group, are evidently sweepers in this period as by one author a Chandala is enjoined to enter a village to sweep "during the first half of the day, carrying a broom under his armpit and a small pot hanging at his neck," probably to contain his spittle. Penalties and purification rites are prescribed for Brahmins who become defiled by contact with the untouchables. The purification, which consisted of living on cow's urine for a number of days, to be undergone by a Brahmin who drank water from a Chandala's vessel indicates the attitude toward these unclean castes.

With but few exceptions the lot of the Depressed Classes seems to have been accepted until recent times by themselves and by the rest of the population as part of the natural order of society. As early as the twelfth century an attempt was made to improve the religious condition of these people. The philosopher Ramanuja effected a slight modification of the rules regarding temple entry and in some parts of India the untouchables were permitted to worship in the temples one day in the year. On the whole, however, their position socially, economically, and religiously continued to be depressed.

By way of summary it may be stated that of the factors contributing to the formation of the Depressed Classes three are of prime importance. (1) Due to historical circumstances, the Aryan-speaking people were brought into contact with groups which, because of differences in physical features and in social customs, they considered inferior to themselves. (2) The idea of purity for ceremonial purpose and the necessity for safeguarding this, favored the growth of theories that certain occupations and habits were unclean, and that people who followed them were a source of pollution to others. (3) Occupation, tending from very early times to be hereditary, became associated with caste, so that certain castes as a whole rather than unorganized groups of individuals came to be regarded as by nature degraded.

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I. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

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A. Statement of the ProblemBy DR. J. Neelam
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One of the obstacles to a settlement of the present political situation in India is the minority problem. The Indian population of roughly 390 millions is composed of several religious groups which form under the present constitution separate elements in the body politic. The most important of these are Hindus, Muslims, Indian Christians and Sikhs. The Hindus, having a population of about 256 millions, constitute the majority, while the other groups with their numbers falling far short of this, are, on a religious basis, permanent minorities.

In addition to religious minorities there are other groups based on a community of special interests which entitle them to separate representation in the legislatures. Thus, there are seats reserved for landholders, for representatives of labor, for representatives of commerce and industry, etc.

Another minority group is composed of primitive peoples, distinguished by racial and cultural differences from the rest of the population.

Different from all of these is the minority known as the Depressed Classes or Scheduled Castes. Hindu by religion, these castes are distinguished from Hindus in general by social disabilities and economic backwardness. Because of their common position in relation to members of the higher castes, these castes on the lowest levels of society may be considered one, more or less uniform, group. By virtue of their numbers they are second in importance only to the Muslims. Their leaders, like the Muslims, fear rule by the Hindu majority and state that they will not agree to a transfer of power on the part of the British unless the constitution provides safeguards for their welfare. Though their prominence in political affairs is recent, they are an increasingly powerful and vocal group. Due to the fact that the justice of their complaints and the legitimacy of their aims are admitted by everyone, no future government of India can fail to consider their position.

B. Nomenclature

Various names have been given to this group: Exterior Castes, a recent substitute for the old, unsatisfactory term "outcaste," and Panchama (Fifth), have reference to the fact that the group is exterior to the four principal castes; members of these low castes are Untouchables because they are a source of pollution to higher caste people; the name Depressed Classes is descriptive of their social and economic condition; under the term Scheduled Castes, Government segregates this group as a minority within the Hindu fold for the purposes of administration and representation; Gandhi refers to these people as Harijans (Children of God) to express his sympathy for their cause.

C. Origin and Development of the Depressed Classes

For our knowledge of the origin and development of the ideas and practices which resulted in the formation of the Depressed Classes, as indeed of the whole caste complex, we have to rely upon information afforded by the study of ancient Hindu literature. 1/

With regard to the social organization of pre-Aryan India we have no information. The Aryan settlements in North India took place probably between 1500 and 1200 B.C.; and the Vedic literature which tells us something of contemporary life and customs may be given the round date of 1000 B.C. The newcomers seem to have been impressed with the dark skins of their predecessors as compared with their own, and we

II. DELIMITATION OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

A. Criteria

The delimitation of the Depressed Classes as a group distinguished from the other elements of Hindu society depends upon the criteria selected. Castes are usually defined as depressed, the members of which (1) cause pollution either by touch or within a certain distance; (2) are denied access to Hindu temples; (3) are prohibited from drawing water from village wells.

(1) The idea that certain castes cause pollution, whether by touch or by their presence, depends directly on the fact that higher castes regard as impure people who follow unclean occupations, or whose habits are such as to cause disgust. Thus scavengers, leather-workers, washermen are considered degraded because of their occupations, while castes which make a practice of eating beef, carrion, or other foods taboo to orthodox Hindus are considered impure regardless of what occupation they follow.

The theory of pollution takes different forms in different parts of India. Generally speaking, in the north only direct contact with an impure person necessitates purification on the part of a higher caste individual. But even in the Punjab, for example "...in private buildings no caste Hindu would let a sweeper enter his residential room, not to speak of the latter ever dreaming of going into the kitchen. In many cases the shadow of a Chamar [leather-worker] or a Chuhra [sweeper] would pollute a caste Hindu if he happened to be in his own house but he would not mind such a thing in a playground or on a public road." 2/ Conditions in Madras may be taken as typical for southern India. There in addition to pollution by touch we find "distance pollution," according to which certain very low castes have to avoid approaching within a stated distance, varying from 24 to 64 feet. In Cochin for one caste, the Nayadis, the distance is, or was, 300 feet. To what extent such theories determine practice at the present time is difficult to say. Modern methods of travel, for example, make it impossible for the high castes to avoid contact with people whom they consider untouchable, and it is probably only in remote rural areas that a low-caste individual gets off the road on the approach of a member of a higher caste in order to avoid contaminating him.

Nevertheless many social conditions and taboos based on the principle of untouchability persist today. All over India the depressed castes occupy a separate part of the village and are segregated from the rest of the community. Children of Depressed Classes are still, in some areas, denied the right to attend schools along with those of the higher castes. Food and drink taboos which operate to prevent higher castes from accepting food or drinking water from the hands of people belonging to the Depressed Classes are still of great importance.

(2) As a direct result of the theory that unclean castes are a source of pollution, a number of castes are denied the right to enter the interior of Hindu temples on the ground that sacred places and objects must be protected from desecration. This restriction is usually more severe in the south of India than in the north. The Depressed Classes of Travancore are by definition those of which the members are not allowed to proceed beyond the outer walls; a number of other low castes whose members are allowed to penetrate as far as the first courtyard are considered to be only partially depressed, or "backward."

The denial of the right of temple entry, it must be noted, is a social as well as a religious disability. Hindu temples usually contain schools, from which the untouchable children are automatically debarred;

The caste system in Hindu society is not as static or immutable as it has sometimes been conceived, and it must be borne in mind that changes in the composition of the Depressed Classes have taken place from time to time. It has apparently always been possible, though difficult, for individuals to improve their status even to the extent of rising in the caste hierarchy, and without doubt some of the attempts made by entire castes to escape from the depressed group have been successful. From the twelfth century on, Islam offered a chance for Hindu untouchables to rid themselves of their religious disabilities. Christianity, like Islam, theoretically recognizes no caste distinctions, and many from the depressed group and even whole castes have adopted conversion as a means of re-classification. On the other hand, the number of depressed castes has been steadily augmented from the ranks of the aboriginal population. The incorporation of primitive tribes into the Hindu structure, begun when the Aryan-speaking peoples first entered India, is still in process today. And today, as in the past, primitive tribes are assigned to a degraded position in the system.

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and in many cases the temple grounds include buildings which serve as a town or village hall.

(3) As in the matter of temple entry, unclean castes are prohibited from drawing water from the village well because they are considered to pollute it and to render it unfit for use by higher castes. Here again conditions vary according to the part of India under consideration. In the Punjab, where water is scarce "the scruples disappear in proportion as the difficulty to secure water increases. The untouchables usually have their own wells, but very often would take water from the water courses or wells or canals. In cases where the whole population depends on water stored in ponds they usually obtain it at a separate ghat at some distance from that of Caste Hindus." 3/ The Bengal Census Report for 1931 contains an excellent account of the modifications and variations of the general rules which are to be found in that province. "In certain areas the very lowest classes of scavengers, sweepers, etc., are not allowed to use the public wells, but in most cases the restriction does not exist at all, and where it exists, it is either dependent on the size or nature of the well or is overcome by some form of adjustment between the classes. In some districts, for instance, members of the sweeper classes are not allowed to use kacha [unmasoned] wells, but may use masonry wells, or they are excluded from wells with a diameter less than a certain distance (say 6 ft.) but are permitted to use wells larger than these. In some cases the higher castes, in a manner of speaking, take the disability upon themselves, and voluntarily leave certain wells exclusively to the lower castes; or the lower castes, when they wish to draw water, will not let down their own vessels or touch the vessel used for drawing the water by higher castes, but will wait beside the well till one of the higher castes fills their vessels". 4/

B. Classification

When it comes to deciding on the basis of these criteria what particular castes are to be included in the list of Depressed Classes, certain difficulties are encountered. Some of these difficulties are inherent in the criteria themselves. To begin with the practices centering around the concept of untouchability are not such that a line can be drawn clearly dividing touchables from untouchables. The difficulty of distinguishing the Depressed Classes from the rest of the population on the basis of such a criterion is discussed by the Census Superintendent of the United Provinces. The whole subject, he writes, "is much complicated by the fact that different castes and even the same caste in different localities have varying standards of untouchability. The average Brahman standard is naturally much higher than that of Kshatriyas and Vaishyas; that of Kshatriyas and Vaishyas is higher than that of the Sudra castes; and the standard and observance varies considerably even among Brahmans: the extremely orthodox will state that they regard all the Sudras and more humble castes...as untouchables whereas other Brahmans will include only those castes outside the four varnas [main caste groups], and even then will not strictly observe the rites for purification after contact." 5/ The situation is still more confused by the fact that untouchability exists among the depressed castes and there is scarcely any caste so low that its members do not consider themselves polluted by members of another caste. Hutton in the 1931 Census Report states: "Indeed as between different sections of the exterior castes prejudice is just as strong as between the interior and exterior castes generally. The Mahars in Bombay have objected to sharing their councils and conferences with Chamars and Mahars and Chamars have unanimously spurned the Bhangi." 6/ It is obvious that it is almost impossible to define one caste as untouchable and another as touchable when there is no absolute standard of reference.

With regard to the question of temple entry, and the use of village wells, the difficulties are of a different nature. The denial of

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the right of certain castes to enter Hindu temples is clear enough, but there is in many areas a considerable amount of latitude in the application of the prohibition and frequent exceptions to the rule. This is especially true in the north of India and for this reason, the criterion of temple entry is often overlooked in the assignment of castes to the depressed group. The same objections have been made to the prohibition of the use of village wells as a criterion. Conditions prevailing in the Punjab and Bengal, for example, have already been discussed, and it is apparent that in many cases it cannot be said that castes classified as depressed are under any great disadvantage with regard to the use of wells.

Another problem lies in the definition of the term Hindu. Since non-Hindus, although they may be regarded as untouchable and refused entry to Hindu temples, are excluded from the Depressed Classes, the question arises, "what constitutes a Hindu?" The presence in India of large numbers of primitive peoples who, originally practicing religions of their own, have become more or less Hinduized gives the answer to this question more than academic importance, since almost invariably tribes of primitive origin enter the Hindu social system as depressed castes. Hinduism contains almost every shade of belief and a well-nigh all-inclusive range of practices, and to draw a line between it and primitive religions is sufficiently difficult. When, as has frequently happened, primitive tribes take Brahmans as priests, attach sanctity to the cow, and worship at Hindu temples, the line may be said to disappear, and the classification of the primitive tribes becomes a matter of doubt. Whether such tribes are listed as Depressed Hindu or Primitive often depends on nothing more objective than the opinion of the enumerator.

Finally, another criterion, adopted in practice if not in theory, for the classification of the Depressed Classes is that of economic condition. The definition of a depressed caste as one whose "social, economic and other circumstances are such that it will be unable to secure adequate representation of its political views or adequate protection of its interests without some form of special franchise concession," 7/ which was suggested for the purpose of determining the franchise, was not officially adopted for the census enumeration. Nevertheless, certain castes which are untouchable and subject to other restrictions are not included with the depressed castes because of their relatively high economic position. In Assam, for example, castes are classified as depressed "whose water is not acceptable and who, in addition are so deficient as castes in education, wealth and influence or, for some reason connected with their traditional occupations, are so looked down upon that there seems little hope of their being allowed by Hindu society to acquire any further social privileges within--at any rate--the next decade." 8/

With the foregoing remarks as a preface, several general statements may be made regarding the classification of castes as depressed.

(1) A caste listed as depressed may be regarded by caste Hindus as untouchable; its members may be denied the right to enter Hindu temples; they may be forbidden to use village wells. It cannot be assumed, however, that any caste listed as depressed is laboring under all these disadvantages.

(2) A certain caste may be depressed in one section of India but not in another; and a caste that is treated as depressed in one part of a province is not necessarily so regarded in the whole area.

(3) Some castes which according to the criteria accepted should be listed as depressed are not included in the Depressed Classes. That this is the case is due to the fact that such castes are not economically backward.

Table 1, taken from the Census of India for 1931, gives the figures for the Depressed Classes by provinces and states.

Table I

(Census of India 1931. Vol. I, p. 494)

Province or State	Total Population	Total Hindu	Total Exterior Castes	Percentage of Exte- rior castes on--	
				Hindu Population	Total Population
INDIA	335,852,597	238,616,569	50,195,258	14	12
PROVINCES	256,754,589	177,149,417	39,063,497	15	12
Ajmer-Merwara	560,292	434,509	76,816	18	14
Assam	8,622,251	4,931,760	1,829,009	37	21
Baluchistan (Districts and Administered Territories)	463,508	41,432	5,702	14	1
Bengal	50,114,002	21,570,407	6,899,809	32	14
Bihar and Orissa	37,677,576	31,011,474	5,744,393	19	15
Bombay	21,854,866	16,621,221	1,750,424	11	8
Central Provinces and Berar	15,507,723	13,338,223	2,818,346	21	18
Coorg	163,327	146,007	24,803	17	15
Delhi	636,246	399,863	72,883	18	11
Madras	46,740,107	41,277,370	7,234,104	18	15
North-West Frontier Province	2,425,076	142,977	5,468	4	--
Punjab	23,580,852	6,328,588	1,279,459	20	5
United Provinces of Agra and Oudh	48,408,763	40,905,586	11,322,281	28	23
States and Agencies	79,098,088	61,467,152	11,131,761	18	14
Assam States	625,606	272,890	1,421	1	--
Baluchistan States	405,109	12,249	20	--	--
Baroda State	2,443,007	2,152,071	203,043	9	8
Bengal States	973,336	641,662	30,822	5	3
Bihar and Orissa States	4,652,007	4,194,878	631,864	15	14
Bombay States	4,468,396	3,921,088	348,574	9	8
Central India Agency	6,632,790	5,852,204	797,902	14	12
Central Provinces States	2,483,214	1,788,401	252,732	14	10
Gwalior State	3,523,070	3,271,576	678,119	21	19
Hyderabad State	14,436,148	12,176,727	2,473,230	20	17

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Jammu and Kashmir State	3,646,243	736,222	170,928	23	5
Madras States Agency	6,754,484	4,323,150	1,960,370	45	29
Cochin State	1,205,016	780,484	125,339	16	10
Travancore State	5,095,973	3,134,888	1,769,735	56	35
Other Madras States	453,495	407,778	65,296	16	14
Mysore State	6,557,302	6,015,880	1,000,326	17	15
N.W. Frontier Province (Agencies and Tribal Areas)	46,451	13,651	542	4	1
Punjab States	437,787	383,883	94,347	25	22
Punjab States Agency	4,472,218	1,887,249	392,999	21	9
Rajputana Agency	11,225,712	9,578,805	1,565,409	16	14
Sikkim State	109,808	47,074	2,029	4	2
United Provinces States	1,206,070	950,724	208,864	22	17
Western India States Agency	3,999,250	3,245,768	318,220	10	8

A word may be said concerning the accuracy of these figures. Since under the present political system the Indian population is divided into a number of mutually exclusive groups forming separate electorates, the struggle for political power involves attempts on the part of each group to increase its numerical strength. Especially are the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs anxious to have their numbers as large as possible. In the 1931 census these three groups made strenuous efforts to persuade members of the depressed castes to return themselves as the canvassers desired. The Hindus, who not long ago refused to admit that the untouchables were Hindus, energetically started a campaign to persuade the Depressed Classes to return themselves as Hindus and to omit caste names or to return themselves as members of one of the three highest castes. It is quite likely that such practices were even more widespread when the 1941 census was taken. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were probably equally active in this respect. There is no doubt that there is some justification for the claim that the figures do not accurately represent the total number of untouchables in India. Dr. Ambedkar, one of the leaders of the Depressed Classes, declares that the correct figure would be 60 million. Since, however, he is quite as much interested in magnifying the number of Depressed Classes for political reasons as Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs are interested in increasing their own groups, 60 millions may safely be regarded as an exaggerated estimate. Probably the number lies somewhere between 50 and 60 millions, with the first figure being more nearly accurate.

It may be noted that there is wide variation in both the numbers of the Depressed Classes and their proportion to the Hindu population in the different provinces. One fact is striking: with the exception of Travancore, where the very high proportion of the Depressed Classes is not easily explained, the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the Hindu population is highest in Assam, Bengal, and the United Provinces, where their status in comparison to that of the Depressed Classes in the south of India is relatively high. One possible explanation for this is that where the social disabilities of the Depressed Classes are less acute their position is less sharply distinguished from that of other low castes, and in the classification of castes as depressed, many, not strictly untouchable, are included. This is especially likely to be the case, it seems, where the economic criterion enters into the classification, as in Assam. It is evident that if economic and social position are considered, many low castes, even though touchable, would be eligible for admission to the category of Depressed Classes. It is also possible that in provinces where the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the Hindu population is high, aboriginal tribes have been included. The difficulty of drawing a line between these two sections of Indian society has already been noted.

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C. List of Principal Depressed Castes of India (showing name, number, locality in which considered depressed, and chief occupation). Compiled from the Census of India 1941. Vol. I.

<u>Name</u> (Alternative name in parenthesis)	<u>Localities in which</u> <u>treated as Depressed</u>	<u>Total number</u> <u>treated as Depressed</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Bagri (Bagdi, Badhik)	Ajmer-Merwara, Ben- gal, United Provinces, Gwalior, Rajputana.	1,023,127	Cultivators
Balai (Balahi)	Ajmer-Merwara, Central Provinces and Berar, United Provinces, Cen- tral India, Gwalior, Rajputana.	561,662	Weavers
Bauri (Bavari, Bawaria)	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Delhi, Madras, Punjab, United Pro- vinces, Travancore	721,299	Cultivators
Bhambi (Bambhi)	Ajmer-Merwara, Bom- bay, Central India, Rajputana, Western India States Agency	183,917	Leather- workers
Bhangi (Lalbegi, Mehtar, Halai- khor)	Ajmer-Merwara, Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Bombay, Cen- tral Provinces and Berar, United Pro- vinces, Baroda, Cen- tral India, Gwalior, Rajputana, Sikkim, Western India States Agency.	865,453	Sweepers and scavengers
Bhar	United Provinces	461,624	Field laborer
Bhuinmali	Bengal, Assam	111,439	Sweepers and scavengers
Bhuiya	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Sikkim, United Provinces	738,479	Cultivators
Bhumij	Bihar and Orissa	266,464	Cultivators
Chakkiliyan	Madras, Travancore	630,359	Leather- workers
Chamar (Chambhar, Bal- Khalpa, Samagara, Satnami)	Ajmer-Merwara, Bal- uchistan, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar, Coorg, Delhi, Madras, North West Frontier Province, Punjab, United Provinces,	11,751,187	Leather- workers

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	Baroda, Central India Agency, Gwalior, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajputana, Western India States Agency		
Chuhra	Baluchistan, Delhi, North West Frontier Province, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir	484,596	Sweepers
Dhobi	Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar, United Provinces, Sikkim	1,406,291	Washermen
Dom (Domar, Dombo, Dumma, Bhansphor, Basor, Dharakar, Patni, Wansfoda)	Ajmer-Merwara, Assam, Bengal, Baroda, Bihar and Orissa, Bombay, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, Punjab, United Provinces, Central India, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajputana, Gwalior	884,403	Basket-makers, drummers, scavengers, etc.
Dusadh	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, United Provinces	1,400,878	Cultivators and servants
Ganda	Central Provinces	108,843	Cotton-weavers
Ghasia	Baluchistan, Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras	132,382	Cultivators and field laborers
Hari	Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa	262,354	Scavengers and menials
Iravan	Travancore	869,863	Toddy-drawers
Jaliya Kai-bartta	Assam, Bengal	501,146	Fishermen and boatmen
Jhalo Malo	Assam, Bengal	208,925	Artisans
Kandra	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa	159,837	Fishermen and village servants
Kaora	Bengal	107,908	Sweepers and scavengers
Kapali	Bengal	165,583	Jute weavers
Khatik	Baluchistan, Bengal, Central Provinces and Berar, Delhi, United Provinces, Gwalior	241,493	Fruit and vegetable-sellers butchers, field laborer
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	Baluchistan, Central Provinces and Berar, United Provinces, Raj- putana	964,661	Field laborers
Mahar (Cheruman, Dher, Holey, Ma, Holar, Mal, Meh- ra, Pulayan, Vankar)	Ajmer-Merwara, Assam, Bengal, Bombay, Coorg, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, United Pro- vinces, Baroda, Central India, Rajputana, Hydera- bad, Cochin, Travan- core, Western India States Agency	5,447,947	Servants and menials
Mang (Madiga, Matangi, Megh, Meghwal, Mad- gi)	Ajmer-Merwara, Bombay, Coorg, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, Punjab, Baroda, Central India, Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Raj- putana, Western India States Agency	2,547,537	Servants and menials
Muchi (Mochi, Mucchi)	Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar, Coorg, Madras, United Pro- vinces, Sikkim	458,206	Leather-workers
Musahar	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, United Pro- vinces	801,535	Field laborers
Namasudra (Chandala)	Assam, Bengal, Madras	2,267,589	Cultivators
Pallan	Madras, Travancore	855,104	Field laborers
Pan (Panka, Pano, Panik)	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Central Pro- vinces and Berar, Madras	688,456	Cultivators and field laborers
Paraiyan (Sambavam)	Coorg, Madras, Travancore, Cochin	1,200,135	Field laborers
Pasi	Ajmer-Merwara, Baluchistan, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, United Provinces Rajputana	1,651,478	Cultivators, field laborers palm-tappers, toddy-drawers
Pod	Bengal	667,731	Cultivators
Raigar	Ajmer-Merwara Rajputana	152,704	Leather-worker
Silpkar (17401)	United Provinces	313,737	Artisans

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III. PRESENT CONDITION OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

A. Economic Position

1. Disabilities. Despite some recent changes affecting the condition of the exterior castes, economically and socially the group remains underprivileged. Social segregation, in ancient times imposed upon outcastes because they were considered unclean, has already been noted. This persists today. Throughout India, part of the village, usually the most undesirable section, is set aside for the houses of the Depressed Classes. The Mahar quarters in Berar have been described as being "sordid and insanitary; very often they are near the village midden or the places where the carcasses of cattle are dumped." 9/ In a typical village of South India the caste community is contrasted with that of the outcastes:

"On the west side of the high road is the caste village, open, exposed to the sun. One house in it is imposing, with two stories, a flat roof, a covered approach, ornamental iron gate and pillars adorned with paintings. The two parallel streets...are maintained in a fit condition for cart traffic. The houses, some built of brick, some of earth, some tiled, some thatched, have the little pial, or veranda facing the street with niches in the walls for lights to burn at nightfall. Built round little courts which are open to the sky, they give seclusion to those who desire it... and the women habitually stay very much indoors..."

"To the east of the high road is the pariah village with its own architecture and its own temples. It has no streets, only paths worn smooth by the pressure of bare feet. It lies altogether in the shade, in a grove of palms mixed with trees of various kinds. Houses are made of a framework of sticks, the roofs thatched with palm leaves, and the walls also woven, as it were, of leaves and twigs. These dwellings are dark inside, but with sufficient openings to keep well-ventilated. The floor is bare earth. There is little privacy here. Men, women and children live in the open." 10/

Segregation of the Depressed Classes is likewise a feature of city life. Crowded and insanitary slums or hutting grounds for the Depressed Classes are typical of all large cities. In a Madras slum the huts, "which are generally made of mud and thatch or of old kerosene tins, are low hovels, without any aperture for light or air except a doorway so small that one has to stoop to enter. The average size is 8 feet by 9 feet, though many are smaller. In some cherries [slums] the huts are built back to back, or are separated only by the narrowest alleys, with the result that there is overcrowding of the very worst kind. In most cases the houses are so flimsy that they afford no effective shelter whether in the monsoon or in the hot weather." 11/

Generally speaking the Depressed Classes occupy the lowest economic levels of Indian society. Although a few have managed to acquire wealth, the vast majority are extremely poor. In the villages the functional castes, such as sweepers, washermen, leather-workers, weavers, etc., are for the most part entirely dependent upon the higher caste people for their subsistence. Occasionally they are given plots of land for their communal services; more often they are paid in kind. Both responsibilities and payments are regulated by custom, and under ideal conditions the depressed castes enjoy a large measure of security, even though this is at a bare subsistence level.

Some of the Depressed Classes are cultivators and self-supporting. These are especially numerous in eastern India where they are by no means desperately poor by comparison with the rest of the population. In northern India agricultural castes which are depressed can generally obtain only the poorest lands, and their economic position is precarious.

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Large numbers of the Depressed Classes all over India are field laborers with no sort of proprietorship in the land. In the south they were until recently literally tied to the soil and certain low castes were bought and sold like cattle along with the land on which they worked. Although this sort of slavery has been abolished, these laborers are not much more independent than they were formerly; the relationship which exists between them and their employers can best be described as feudal.

An excellent indication of the standard of living of the Depressed Classes is afforded by information concerning rates of payment for services. In a village of Cochin State the population of 2000 includes about 300 outcastes who are "more or less serfs attached to the soil...the men plough, tend cattle, water the gardens, gather food etc., while the women pluck the paddy seedlings to replant them, and do work connected with the harvesting, separating the paddy from the stalks etc. They are employed as a rule throughout the year by their masters; in leisure days, however, they are paid a little less than the stated wage." 12/ Men are paid four pounds of paddy per day, women three pounds, and boys one pound. In addition men receive ten pounds, and women eight pounds on "certain festive days in the year." 12/ Once a year men are given a pair of clothes each 2 yards long, and women a pair three and a half yards long.

In the Punjab, agricultural laborers, who are usually sweepers and leatherworkers by caste, are paid in money or grain. In the District of Sheikhupura, such a servant earns 8 to 10 rupees per month plus two cotton shawls and shoes; in Shahpur, 20 maunds (1645 lbs.) of wheat per year, and in addition, two meals a day, clothes, shoes and tobacco; in Ferozepore, one-fifth of the produce of the fields cultivated and two meals a day. 13/

Some statistics from Travancore are an index to the economic position of the Depressed Classes relative to that of the rest of the population. These are based on a random sample of 55,803 earners from the various communities.

Table II

(Compiled from Census of India 1931, Vol. Travancore, pt. I, pp.

Number of persons of each community in the random sample owning wet land.

Extent of wet land owned	All com- munities	Brahmen	Nevar	Ilava	Depressed Hindu	Other Hindus	Syrian Christian	Other Christians	Muslim
Below 20 cents	1,547	2	648	212	41	275	164	137	68
20-40 "	2,248	3	949	327	45	321	313	168	122
40-60 "	1,818	6	791	248	34	218	319	89	113
60-80 "	1,105	3	495	138	15	132	189	63	70
80-100 "	538	2	266	62	9	44	105	17	33
Total below 1 acre	7,256	16	3,149	987	144	990	1,090	474	406
1-2 acres	2,096	18	945	227	28	169	503	81	125
2-3 "	830	13	387	74	9	64	203	33	47
3-4 "	412	10	194	36	1	21	105	24	21
4-5 "	263	8	113	17	1	18	72	15	19
5-6 "	147	4	65	10	1	16	43	3	5
6-7 "	83	5	33	1	..	5	30	5	4
7-8 "	100	7	38	6	1	6	28	6	8
8-9 "	67	1	26	7	..	4	22	1	6
9-10 "	33	1	13	2	..	5	10	1	1
Total below 10 acres	11,287	83	4,963	1,367	185	1,298	2,106	643	642
10-100 acres	296	39	113	10	1	23	89	4	17
100 acres and above	10	3	1	..	..	5	1	..	..
TOTAL OWNERS	11,593	125	5,077	1,377	186	1,326	2,196	647	659
TOTAL EARNERS	55,803	296	9,910	10,413	6,219	9,864	8,363	7,501	3,237

Note: In this table and other similar tables values corresponding to the upper limit of each group are included in the next higher group.

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Table II

Number of persons of each community in the random sample owning dry land.

Extent of dry land owned	All communities	Brahman	Nayar	Ilava	Depressed Hindu	Other Hindus	Syrian Christian	Other Christians	Muslim
Below 20 cents	2,382	9	498	433	132	561	279	308	162
20-40 "	3,274	6	774	661	168	687	426	361	191
40-60 "	3,602	15	944	630	215	714	501	350	233
60-80 "	2,343	6	643	419	127	420	366	200	162
80-100 "	1,049	5	313	234	44	118	213	71	51
Total below 1 acre	12,650	41	3,172	2,377	686	2,500	1,785	1,290	799
1-2 acres	6,773	34	1,864	1,153	359	1,073	1,304	546	440
2-3 "	3,330	17	951	488	130	456	801	319	168
3-4 "	1,778	13	518	225	53	238	473	161	97
4-5 "	1,150	10	353	155	28	130	313	85	76
5-6 "	775	9	244	102	12	84	215	62	47
6-7 "	435	8	130	52	3	38	137	46	21
7-8 "	284	..	74	27	9	24	110	27	13
8-9 "	280	4	84	34	7	28	93	17	13
9-10 "	115	3	40	10	..	14	36	8	4
Total Below 10 Acres	27,570	139	7,430	4,623	1,287	4,585	5,267	2,561	1,678
10-100 acres	1,065	31	327	101	8	92	372	80	54
100 acres and above	38	7	10	2	..	5	13	1	..
TOTAL OWNERS	28,673	177	7,767	4,726	1,295	4,682	5,652	2,642	1,732
TOTAL EARNERS	55,803	296	9,910	10,413	6,219	9,864	8,363	7,501	3,237

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Table II

Number of persons in each community owning houses.

Value of Houses	All com- munities	Brahman	Nayar	Ilava	Depressed Hindu	Other Hindus	Syrian Christian	Other Christians	Muslim
Rs.									
Below 100	22,645	16	3,289	4,493	2,364	4,534	3,185	3,462	1,302
100—200	4,371	14	1,179	747	81	715	959	372	304
200—300	2,115	13	606	311	32	254	580	193-	126
300—400	1,331	13	408	172	12	166	388	86	86
400—500	555	9	167	79	8	57	170	38	27
500—600	917	12	289	108	8	109	276	74	41
600—700	192	3	65	13	1	16	75	9	10
700—800	348	3	120	35	4	27	107	33	19
800—900	154	7	58	14	1	10	45	13	6
900—1,000	53	1	13	4	..	6	21	3	5
1,000—3,000	1,100	53	367	100	6	73	380	58	63
3,000—5,000	147	14	36	2	..	16	63	10	6
5,000 and above	112	18	23	8	..	13	35	7	8
TOTAL OWNERS	34,040	176	6,620	6,086	2,517	5,996	6,284	4,358	2,003
TOTAL EARNERS	55,803	296	9,910	10,413	6,219	9,864	8,363	7,501	3,237

Table II

Number of persons in each community owning movable properties according to the random sample.

Value	All com- munities	Brahman	Nayar	Ilavar (¹)	Depressed Hindu	Other Hindus	Syrian Christian	Other Christians	Muslim
Rs.									
Below 100	23,628	46	4,878	4,571	1,238	4,461	4,440	2,681	1,313
100-- 200	3,007	35	868	390	36	440	689	333	216
200-- 300	1,015	38	260	141	4	110	281	96	85
300-- 400	476	23	158	40	7	50	123	41	34
400-- 500	121	7	30	12	2	13	37	9	11
500-- 600	294	21	68	37	3	39	76	29	21
600-- 700	59	5	20	5	..	5	13	6	5
700-- 800	62	5	15	3	..	12	15	8	4
800-- 900	36	4	8	1	..	5	13	2	3
900-- 1,000	10	..	2	..	..	..	8	..	..
1,000-- 3,000	230	20	49	31	3	20	74	20	13
3,000-- 5,000	17	2	4	1	..	2	6	2	..
5,000 and above	21	6	2	..	..	5	7	..	1
TOTAL OWNERS	28,976	212	6,362	5,232	1,293	5,162	5,782	3,227	1,706
TOTAL EARNERS	55,803	296	9,910	10,413	6,219	9,864	8,363	7,501	3,237

2. Tendencies toward Economic Improvement. Formerly all individuals, including those from the Depressed Classes as well as other Hindus, were more strictly limited to the hereditary occupation of their caste than is the case today. The depressed castes more than any other benefit from abandoning their hereditary calling, since in many cases, they are depressed on account of the unclean nature of their occupations. In the Punjab, for example, "The sweeper who gives up his occupation, the leather-worker who abandons the use of undressed hides and works in tanned leather, or abandons the use of leather altogether and seeks another occupation, thereby quite definitely raises himself in the social scale." ^{14/} This tendency is so marked in the United Provinces that it has been stated that "it is quite common to regard as untouchable only those of the untouchable castes who still follow the unclean traditional occupations of those castes, while the others are not so regarded. Recognizing this fact those members of an untouchable caste who have left the traditional occupation and are now engaged in a more respectable mode of livelihood will often form a separate branch of the caste, usually under a new caste name, and endeavour to dissociate themselves with the old parent caste... This tendency is responsible for reports from several districts that the average Brahman now treats as an untouchable only those actually employed in scavenging and handling dead animals, or who eat flesh." ^{15/}

Attempts to break away from the traditional and degrading occupation occasionally take an uneconomic form. "Many Madigas, [a caste of leather-workers in Madras] feeling that their connection with tanning and leather-work is the cause of their degradation will resist all efforts to interest them in the production of the higher quality and more lucrative leather goods and engage in very subordinate work at meager pay away from contact with their traditional occupation." ^{16/}

Table III compiled from the 1931 Census Reports, indicates the extent to which the Depressed Classes are engaged in occupations other than those traditionally associated with their castes.

As might be expected, the breakdown of the connection between caste and hereditary occupation is more marked in the cities than in rural areas. The growth of industry has created new fields of enterprise for all castes, and concurrently the increase in population and the consequent pressure on the land has necessitated a change in occupation. Self-contained cooperative village units fail to function efficiently when the number of members of the component castes increases beyond a certain point. Many individuals from the depressed castes have from choice or necessity migrated to the cities in search of a livelihood. It is estimated that 20 percent of the industrial workers in the city of Bombay are members of the Depressed Classes. ^{17/}

It is not to be supposed however that untouchability, segregation, and other discriminatory practices have altogether disappeared in the cities. Urban living conditions among the Depressed Classes have already been noted. Although the evidence is not conclusive, it appears that segregation of the untouchables is a feature in certain factories. Speaking of conditions in Bombay cotton mills, Dr. Ambedkar claimed that the Depressed Class men were entirely kept out of certain departments, and that this discrimination was based on untouchability. ^{18/} On the other hand, in the spinning mills of Akola (Berar) Depressed Class men work in all departments along with other castes, but it has been charged that they are given less work to prevent them from getting as much pay as the other workers. ^{19/}

It is probably on the whole correct to say that urban industrial life offers to the Depressed Classes opportunities more nearly equal to those of the higher castes than does the old village life where a sweeper, for example, unless he was able to acquire land, had no expectation of exchanging his ill-paid occupation for a more remunerative one.

In the hope of bettering their economic status and escaping oppressive caste restrictions many from the Depressed Classes have emigrated to other parts of India or to foreign countries. As far as India itself is concerned, most migrants go to Assam where they obtain work on the tea plantations. This may be of either a temporary or a permanent nature. Some remarks on the subject made by a local recruiting agent for the Tea Districts Labour Association in Madras, though perhaps optimistic, indicate some of the reasons for emigration and the benefits derived.

"Migration to Assam therefore offers to the emigrant facilities which he finds impossible to obtain in his own home. Work is obtainable all year round on gardens and every opportunity is given the labourer to better his economic and social status. Travel broadens outlook and this is as true with the lower classes as with his more fortunate brethren. The once timid and down-trodden Sowra or Madiga, after a spell on a tea garden, returns, not only physically improved but also in his bearing and social status, and inclined even to be domineering and to demand a say in all matters governing his social welfare.

"Away from the influences of his caste superiors, the untouchable reaches a higher standard both of living and personal freedom, so much so that the higher castes are for this reason very much against his migrating at all and particularly to Assam where these tendencies are more easily acquired." 20/

Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, Fiji, the West Indies and South Africa all attract large numbers of the Depressed Classes. While some remain abroad many of them return to India, where, with what they have managed to save, they buy land and cattle. One of the Depressed Classes Associations in Madras, in a memorandum to the Indian Statutory Commission in 1928, strongly condemned the policy of the government in restricting emigration, on the grounds that the Depressed Classes derived immense benefit from their opportunities in foreign lands. 21/

3. Government Efforts for Economic Amelioration. Within the last 25 or 30 years the Provincial and State Governments have taken steps to improve the economic condition of the Depressed Classes. One of the most important of these measures is the provision of land for house sites or cultivation. By the end of the year 1934-35, in Madras alone, 35,169 house sites on government-owned waste land had been assigned to the depressed castes. Such sites are free of cost, the recipient being required to build a house within a stated period, and rent is charged only after a certain number of years, usually seven. Another 35,540 sites on private land acquired for this purpose by the Government were assigned during the same period, the cost to the Depressed Classes being spread over a number of years. 22/ By 1937-38, 417,794.84 acres were assigned to these castes for cultivation. 23/

Travancore and Cochin States have likewise assigned lands for cultivation to these classes. Cochin had, by 1931, established 41 colonies with 1,640 families settled in them, where the untouchables were given house sites, land and the necessary implements for cultivation. "The ownership of land creates a new and permanent interest in their minds, and provides a powerful incentive for honest work, which is absent in the case of those who live on lands from which they may be evicted at the will of the owners whereby they will be deprived of the fruits of their labors." 24/

Other ameliorative measures consist of the construction and repair of wells for the use of the Depressed Classes. Madras in 1937-38 spent over one lakh of rupees (\$30,000) in this type of work, and Rs. 6,472-11-0 (\$1,942) on sanitary improvements in the slums of Madras City. 25/ Generally speaking, probably because the need has not been so great, other provinces have been more backward in this respect.

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Table III
Compiled from the 1961 Census of India Reports.

Province	Quota	Traditional Occupation	Population	Population of Males and Females	Population Working Primarily in Traditional Occupations	Collectors' Quota, Males	Employed in Subsidized	Population Employed in Trade	Public Works	Public Administration	Professional and Unskilled Labor
Bamang	Bamang	Barrenness	86,990	17,508	30,495	5,466	3,428	88	134	714	344
	Chander	Barrenness	291,611	128,665	46,110	11,071	12,188	1,797	97	316	143
	Chander	Village Barrenness	1,246,106	568,363	128,232	287,949	31,437	4,138	698	6,943	2,397
	Bar	Village Barrenness	309,918	138,116	52,762	50,466	9,837	1,366	140	2,213	897
Bamang	Chander	Barrenness	150,158	80,349	15,467	2,449	23,446	1,310	11	48	537
	Bar	Barrenness	140,042	66,033	17,446	4,718	3,133	680	603	369	196
Bamang	Bar	Barrenness	132,393	79,799	8,208	3,711	3,494	1,379	145	113	2,483
	Bar	Barrenness	287,668	146,504	36,150	11,133	4,136	2,400	288	287	443
	Bar	Barrenness	300,468	277,323	179,301	12,380	2,394	2,348	1,088	289	4,497
	Chander	Barrenness	4,312,130	3,138,143	146,976	1,137,193	66,097	1,088	1,088	109	2,152
Bamang	Bar	Barrenness	138,116	138,116	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	1,316	1,316	2,111	4,116	335	146	20	4	20
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
Bamang	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
Bamang	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
Bamang	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140
	Bar	Barrenness	141,312	141,312	288,178	126,008	2,103	1,076	140	9	140

Notes: The figures of those working at various occupations do not equal the figures given for the total population of writers, as the table is based on selections from the reports and only the most important findings are given here.

Example for Bombay, the figures for these following occupations other than traditional ones include only earners; figures under working population include earners and writing dependents. In the case of Bombay the figures for these following occupations other than traditional ones include both earners and writing dependents. For all provinces the figures given for those working at traditional occupations include earners and writing dependents.

In the column for cultivators, owners and tenants, the figures for Bombay include field laborers; those for other provinces do not.

The Punjab Census Report lists separately under each caste the numbers of the various religious groups. For this table, only Hindus and Mohammedans have been included.

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Until recent times Government employment was almost entirely out of reach of the Depressed Classes. Caste Hindus objected to being forced to associate with the untouchables in government offices and it was thought inadvisable to appoint Depressed Class men to such posts.

Even today 26/ there is only one member of the Depressed Classes in the Indian Civil Service, and he is a nominated member. Ambedkar estimates that there are not more than 25 in the Provincial Civil Service; most of these are engaged in the work of Revenue Collection. Neither the Judicial Service nor any other branch of the Civil Service has any Depressed Class members.

With regard to the Police Service, Ambedkar writes: "There is the greatest objection to the employment of the Depressed Classes in the Police Service. The police have to arrest and to search and it was long felt that a service such as the police, which confer power of arresting and searching the Hindus and their houses, would never be given to the Depressed Classes without causing a revolt against the British Government by the Hindus. The British Government therefore adopted the safest remedy namely to close the door of police service to the Depressed Classes and it has remained closed to them ever since." 26a/

Some Provincial Governments, however, have recently taken steps to remedy this state of affairs. In Madras, for example, members of the Scheduled Castes are given concessions in employment in Government Service. Approximately one out of twelve appointments are reserved for these castes, the age limit has been raised to 27 years, and the general educational standard has been lowered for the Depressed Classes. 27/

The Depressed Classes were recruited for the army until 1892, after which they were debarred from entering the service. Probably the difficulties involved in housing and messing with the caste Hindus led the Government to take this step. During the last war one battalion was raised but it was disbanded at the end of the war. Recently Wavell requested Ambedkar's assistance in recruiting 3 battalions from the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar made his assistance provisional upon two conditions, (1) that the battalions would not be disbanded at the end of the war, (2) that no caste Hindus would be officers in the battalions. General Wavell agreed to these conditions and two battalions have been formed, with a third under way. 27a/

B. Social Position.

1. Social Disabilities. The theory of pollution is responsible for most of the disabilities which characterize the social position of the Depressed Classes. Just as it led to the practice of confining the untouchables to a certain section of the village, the fear of pollution has resulted in segregation in various other phases of life. The rules restricting social intercourse were always far more stringent in the south of India than in the north, and today, though reforms have been effected which have considerably improved the condition of these low castes all over India, the south still affords numerous and striking examples of social segregation.

Until recent times the Depressed Classes in the south of India were forbidden the use of highways, public conveyances, market places, hospitals, and law courts. Many of these restrictions have practically disappeared except, perhaps in remote rural areas. Not long ago a member of an untouchable caste travelling along the road, had to shout a warning of the risk of pollution and to take to the fields in order to allow the caste Hindu to pass by. Such a custom is probably a thing of the past and even in Travancore it is reported that the Depressed Classes no longer leave the road on the approach of a caste Hindu. To be sure the untouchables may not be able, for example, to take funeral or marriage processions along roads where Brahmans or other high caste individuals live, but this is not regarded as much of a hardship by the Depressed Classes themselves.

As late as 1919 a Madras Government order mentions a petition calling attention to the difficulties experienced by untouchable castes in regard to the use of river and canal ferries. A member of such a caste might have to wait for hours, as he could not travel in company with a Brahman, who, of course had priority. 28/ Generally speaking, however, modern conditions of travel have made it impossible for the high caste Hindus to avoid contact with the untouchables. Third class railway travel in India does not afford much privacy to anyone and the caste Hindus find it more convenient not to inquire into the caste of their fellow-travellers.

The case is similar with respect to law courts. Formerly the Depressed Classes were not permitted to enter courts. As late as 1924 in rural areas in South India neither parties nor witnesses belonging to the untouchable castes were allowed to enter the precincts of the court. Intermediaries took down their statements and conveyed them to the court. Discrimination of this sort is, however, rare today.

The refusal to permit the untouchables to use village wells, not by any means confined to the south of India, has already been noted. On the whole it may be said that in northern and eastern India such restrictions are tending to disappear, or are so modified as to cause comparatively little inconvenience to the Depressed Classes. But a committee appointed to inquire into the condition of the Depressed Classes in Bombay Presidency in 1930 reported that they had not been able to find a single instance where the Depressed Classes were using continuously the same public well as the higher classes. 29/ In South India also, probably very little improvement has been made in this respect. Taboos on accepting food and drink from the untouchables have by no means become inoperative and the fact that a Brahman is usually employed to supply drinking water to train passengers indicates the force of this prohibition.

Probably, from the point of view of the general progress of the Depressed Classes, the most serious result of the fear of pollution and of untouchability is that in many areas the untouchable children are debarred from the schools, or so segregated that the acquisition of knowledge is all but impossible. This sort of segregation is not and probably never has been very marked in northern and eastern India. The Indian Statutory Commission stated 30/ that 75 percent of the Depressed Class pupils in the United Provinces attended schools along with children of the higher castes. 31/ Even in 1928 the Depressed Class children in Bengal were admitted without difficulty to all primary schools. 32/ In central and southern India, until very recently this was not the case. In these sections even today the Depressed Class children are sometimes victims of this type of discrimination. An extreme, but probably not isolated case, was observed in 1930 by the committee appointed to enquire into the condition of the Depressed Classes in Bombay Presidency. An untouchable boy was made to sit on a platform exposed to the elements, outside the school; from time to time the teacher leaned out of the window to give instruction to him. On rainy days he had to go home. 33/ In 1928 it was claimed that in 95 percent of the schools in Baroda the Depressed Class children were made to sit outside. 34/ When the Indian Statutory Commission made their investigation, there were in Madras only 16,000 Depressed Class pupils out of 228,000, studying in ordinary schools. 35/

In India as a whole, in 1931 out of 1000 members of the Depressed Classes 19 were literate. In the Indian States considered separately, the figure was 31 per thousand, in the Provinces, 16 per thousand. Of the Provinces, Baluchistan and Bengal had the highest percentage of literacy among these classes with 69 and 50 per thousand respectively. The Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, and the United Provinces had the lowest, the figures being 8, 6 and 5 per thousand. Taking the Hindus as a whole, out of 1000 aged 20 and over, 96 were literate. 35a/

The following table indicates the state of education among the Depressed Classes in 1931, compared with that of the total population. 36/

Province	No. of Depressed Class Pupils	No. per thousand of Depressed Classes at School	No. per thousand of total population at school
Bengal	433,687	54	63
Bihar and Orissa	24,187	4	32
Bombay	62,903	36	67
Central Provinces	143,008	15	33
Madras	352,162	48	72
Punjab	36,279	30	63
United Provinces	125,383	11	35

A good many of the Depressed Class pupils are no doubt primary school children. In 1935-36 out of 75,792 pupils belonging to this group in Bombay schools, 73,238 were in primary schools; there were only 58 in colleges. 37/

Material inconveniences and disadvantages resulting from the attitude of the caste Hindus towards these Depressed Classes have been noted. More difficult to estimate is the effect of untouchability on their character and personality. It has been said that "Abject dependence, lack of ambition and initiative, carelessness, deceitfulness, extravagance, drunkenness, insolence and harshness in dealing with others are character weaknesses which many observers have found to be especially common among untouchables; they probably all enter into the common understanding of depressed-class mentality. Their exceptional prevalence may, we think, be traced to distorted reactions to oppression." 38/ The lack of independence of thought and action has been stressed by leaders of the Depressed Classes. A memorandum presented to the Indian Statutory Commission contains the following statement: "The high caste land-owning Hindus having crushed the Depressed Classes down to servitude and extreme poverty, made the minds of generations of the Depressed Classes to think and act according to the dictates of their employers and to take their orders as the law of the country. When the minds of the Depressed Classes have been brought to such a state, it is believed, and it is true, that they are incapable of exercising their independence, free thought and even conscience and discretion against the will, wish and pleasure of their caste employers..." 39/ Of more value than such general statements is a concrete instance given in The Hindu of December 24, 1932. In the Tinnevely District of Madras is a caste of untouchables who wash the clothes of other untouchables. The very sight of them is considered polluting and for this reason they are forced to lead a nocturnal life, working between midnight and daybreak. The interviewer records that he had the greatest difficulty in persuading these people to come out of their houses during the daytime and when they finally did so, their bodies were shaking and trembling with fear. 40/ This is of course a very extreme case, and indeed most statements referring to the "servile mentality" of the Depressed Classes are concerned with conditions in Madras or other areas of South India. It is very likely that they are not applicable in the same degree to northern and eastern India.

2. Government Ameliorative Measures. Most of the measures taken by Government on behalf of the Depressed Classes have been designed to remove social disabilities. Where necessary practically all the Provincial and most of the Indian (native) State Governments have passed

laws declaring roads, wells, courts and schools open to these castes. All such laws, however, have to contend with popular prejudice and even where provision has been made for penalties in case of breaches of the rule, these laws have not always proved effective. It is one thing to declare a well open to use by the Depressed Classes, another to force the caste Hindus to permit this use. In Baroda, for example, a State well known for the enlightened policy of its ruler in regard to the Depressed Classes, an artesian well was sunk in 1931 with labor supplied by the depressed castes on condition that they be allowed to draw water from it. On its completion the caste Hindus refused to give them access to it, but eventually it was agreed that the untouchables should lay a 500-foot pipe with a tap at one end which would be for their own use. This was done, but the castes living at the end of the pipe objected and the unfortunate untouchables had to give up the idea of using the well at all. 41/ The fault does not lie entirely with the caste Hindus in such matters. Very often the depressed castes are too timid to assert themselves and take advantage of the privileges given them by law.

The improvement over the old conditions in regard to the use of roads and public conveyances has already been noted. Generally speaking, however, this has come about as a result less of Government intervention than of modern methods of transportation which do not permit strict observance of caste regulations.

Government policy in regard to education of the Depressed Classes has been gradually to abolish separate schools for the untouchable children. In areas where segregation of this sort is a serious problem, the Provincial Governments have refused funds to publicly-managed schools which exclude Depressed Class children and have taken steps to have public schools removed from temples and other places where untouchable children would not be permitted to enter. Although the process of amalgamation has been hindered by the attitude of the caste Hindus, nevertheless, considerable progress has been made. The Province of Bombay will serve as an example: in 1935-36 there were only 431 special primary schools for Depressed Class children with 16,589 pupils as against a total of 73,238 untouchable pupils in all primary schools. 42/

Since among the chief obstacles to educational advance are the poverty and lack of interest of the Depressed Classes themselves, practically all Provincial and State Governments have provided special facilities to encourage pupils from this group. These include scholarships, remission of fees, funds for school supplies and maintenance of special hostels to accommodate the students. In Madras during the year 1937-38 Rs.7.05 lakhs (\$210,000) were spent in education of the Depressed Classes; 62 residential and 3,159 non-residential scholarships were given for ordinary education, and 32 non-residential scholarships to arts colleges. 43/ Public elementary school pupils paid no fees and those in secondary schools and colleges were able to obtain half-fee remissions on the production of poverty certificates. In some schools books and slates were provided free of cost and Depressed Class pupils were exempt from paying the fee for the secondary school-leaving certificate examination. 44/ Recently the Central Government has announced that it will set aside the sum of Rs.3 lakhs (\$90,000) per year to provide educational facilities for the Depressed Classes. One-third of this will be devoted to scholarships for untouchable children, and the remaining 2 lakhs (\$60,000) will be utilized in providing Depressed Class students with funds for advanced study abroad. This sum compares very favorably with the 3 lakhs per year given by the Central Government to the Muslim University of Aligarh and the same amount given to the Hindu University of Benares. 45/

3. Social Climbing. Efforts of the Depressed Classes themselves to improve their position have been directed largely towards effecting a rise in social status. Although it might be expected that their treatment at the hands of caste Hindus would have led to solidarity within the ranks

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of the Depressed Classes, such has not been the case. Since every caste, however lowly, looks with scorn and contempt upon some other caste there has been no concerted attempt to break down the barriers between caste and outcaste. With few exceptions each caste has been interested in its own advancement and indifferent or even hostile to the efforts of other castes. Attempts to rise in the social hierarchy have taken such forms as changing the caste name, giving up unclean occupations, and discontinuing the use of such foods and drinks as are forbidden to orthodox Hindus.

What may be termed the Adi-movement does, however, cut across caste lines. Adi means early, first, or aboriginal and a good many castes of South India, especially in Madras, have given up their ancient names and adopted instead the name of Adi-Dravida, or Adi-Andhra, or Adi-Karnataka, depending upon their location, indicating in this way that they are descendants of the original, pre-Hindu inhabitants of the country. By this means some of the Depressed Classes assert their independence from Hinduism in both its religious and its social sense. The religious aspect of the movement will be discussed later. From the information available it seems that the idea owes its origin to the Government of Madras, who adopted Adi-Dravida and Adi-Andhra as official names for the Depressed Classes about 1922. On the whole it has not been as popular as might have been expected. In the 1931 Census relatively few castes returned these designations in place of their caste names.

Madras	Adi-Dravida	1,619,227
Travancore	" "	966
Coorg	" "	52
Madras	Adi-Andhra	73,313
Madras	Adi-Karnataka	664

The Government of Mysore has adopted the term Adi-Karnataka for all the Depressed castes; the Government of Hyderabad used the term Adi-Hindu. Several Depressed Class associations have taken names of this sort. There are the Adi-Hindu Social Service League, and the Adi-Dravida Educational League, both of Hyderabad, the Adi-Hindu Sabha of Delhi, the All India Adi-Dravida Maha Jana Sabha of Madras, etc.

The practice according to which individual castes lay claim to new names indicative of a higher social status is more developed in the north of India than in the south. Generally the desire is to be recognized as Rajputs, Kshatriyas or Brahmans. Probably the most amusing example of this is given in the Bihar and Orissa Census Report of 1931 in which mention is made of the Pasis "whose unrivalled proficiency in tree climbing is said to have encouraged them to claim a title meaning 'the Brahmans who go up in the air.'" 46/ In most cases these claims are backed up with mythical or pseudo-historical evidence showing derivation from one of the three higher castes. The Bengal Census Superintendent in 1931 had to deal with demands for a change of name on the part of 44 castes, and there were 54 such cases in the United Provinces; most of these were depressed castes. In addition to selecting a new name, members of low castes which are endeavoring to climb in the social scale, adopt the sacred thread, properly worn by only the three upper castes, give up if possible their unclean occupations, and abstain from eating meat and liquor.

As long as the Depressed Classes were content to remain in a subservient position, faithfully performing their duties and making no attempts to rise to equality with their superiors, there was little friction between them and the caste Hindus. Indeed, they played a very essential role in village life, and as one author has remarked, "they were by no means weaponless against aggression. For example if a Jat's cow dies in his owner's sitting room or veranda, only an untouchable can remove the corpse. The urgency of this operation, especially when the thermometer stands at 118 F. in the shade, encourages the cultivators to remain on friendly terms with their social inferiors." 47/

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The patronage of the government and the general temper of the times have tended to foster a spirit of rebellion among the Depressed Classes. Attempts to assert their rights and manifestations of independence on the part of the untouchables have in many cases led to trouble with the caste Hindus. When in 1931 the Government of Baroda abolished separate schools for the Depressed Classes the caste Hindus in some areas expressed their resentment against the untouchables by burning their crops or pouring kerosene into their wells. 48/ The use of untouchable castes of wells, even though these have been declared open to public use, has likewise met with violence on the part of the caste Hindus. In Orissa, when a low caste of palanquin-bearers wished to abandon their traditional means of livelihood, the caste Hindus violently expressed their disapproval of a course which would result in considerable inconvenience to themselves. The refusal of some Mahars of the Central Provinces to remove and skin dead cattle--their hereditary duty--led to assault and rioting. It is ironic though understandable that the caste Hindus discourage the Depressed Classes from giving up their unclean occupations--ironic because the Hindus regard these classes as unclean on account of their occupations--understandable because these very occupations are necessary to village economy.

C. Religion

1. Religious Disabilities. The Depressed Classes are by definition Hindus; non-Hindu groups on the same social and economic plane are not classified as depressed. Until very recent times, however, in the eyes of orthodox caste Hindus the untouchable castes remained outside the pale of Hinduism in spite of the fact that generally speaking they worshipped gods of the Hindu pantheon and observed Hindu ritual. Caste Hindus, fearing pollution for themselves and their deities, kept the Depressed Classes at a safe distance in religious as well as in social life. This attitude has altered somewhat, and today the Hindus are more than anxious to include the untouchables in their ranks. However, most of the restrictions imposed upon the Depressed Classes still persist, even though they have been relaxed to a certain extent in some areas.

Chief among the religious disabilities from which the untouchables suffer is the prohibition against temple entry. As we have seen, Hindus of the south are far more severe in this respect than those of the north of India. In Bengal there are very few castes which are kept entirely outside the temple precincts; and even Chamars and sweepers of the United Provinces are allowed to enter certain temples provided they are wearing a wet cloth as evidence, presumably, that they have recently bathed. In South India the number of castes excluded is greater, and the rules against temple entry are more seldom relaxed. Usually at such temples provision is made for the untouchables to worship by placing a box for their offerings outside the temple precincts. In the villages the depressed castes usually have their own shrines or temples in the section of the village where they live or in a nearby grove of trees. Hindus of all classes pay a considerable amount of attention to local deities and in the worship of these the Depressed Classes frequently play an important part. It is only from the orthodox temples in which the principal gods of Hinduism are worshipped that the untouchables are excluded.

Untouchable castes are not, of course, served by Brahmans. For the numerous ceremonies at which, among the higher castes, Brahman officiates, the Depressed Classes have their own priests.

Recently many temples have been declared open to the untouchables. This is a consequence largely of agitation on the part of the Depressed Classes and some caste Hindus; the influence of Gandhi has also been an important factor. Madras and Bombay in British India, Travancore and some other native states have passed laws opening temples or removing hindrances to such a step in the future. Much, of course, remains

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to be done. The Depressed Classes are far from satisfied with the progress made. In their reactions two opposing trends may be observed. The majority, perhaps, have increased their efforts to achieve an equal footing with the higher castes within the Hindu fold. Many others, however, have renounced the Hindu faith. Some of these declare that they form a group entirely separate from the Hindus; others have become converts to Islam, Sikhism, or Christianity.

2. The Adi-Movement. The movement to have the Depressed Classes recognized as a social and religious group distinct from the other elements of Indian society is comparatively recent. Principally it takes the form of adopting a new name compounded with the term Ad or Adi, as indication that the castes so designated regard themselves as pre-Hindu. The social aspect of this movement has been mentioned above. When the Punjab Census was taken in 1931, there were 399,309 members of the Depressed Classes who returned Ad-Dharm as their religion. These were mostly drawn from the Chuhra and Chamar castes. The Adi-Hindu Sabha of Delhi persuaded the Government of Hyderabad to list all Depressed Classes as Adi-Hindu by religion. The fact is that there is considerable evidence to support the view that a large number of the Depressed Classes are descendants of the aboriginal population of the country. However, comparatively few of the untouchables have been attracted by this movement. And at least one group which has adopted the name of Adi-Hindu does not wish to be completely divorced from Hinduism. When the Adi-Dravida Educational League of Hyderabad claimed that the Depressed Classes as a Community were entirely separate from the followers of Vedic religion, one section of Adi-Hindus maintained that they were Hindus because "the conception of God, the mode of worship, the system of rituals and code of customs, the manner of dress and way of life, of the socially Depressed Classes are identical with those of the caste Hindus." 48a/

3. Conversion. Most of the Depressed Classes who are dissatisfied with their status in Hinduism become converts to other religions. The three chief non-Hindu religions of India, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity, have from very early times attracted converts from the Depressed Classes. This is largely due to the fact that in theory none of these three religions recognizes a caste division of society.

Of the 92,058,096 Muslims in India today, probably the majority has been drawn from the lower castes. Our knowledge regarding the type of converts in the early history of Islam in India is largely a matter of inference, but it seems fairly certain that from the first the lower castes made an important contribution to the Muslim population. Certainly since the middle of the 19th Century many of the converts to Islam have been originally members of the Depressed Classes. Some 40,000 Cherumans in Malabar became Muslims in the ten years between 1871 and 1881. In the first decade of the 20th Century 40,000 converts, mostly belonging to the Chuhra and Chamar castes, embraced Islam in the Punjab alone. 49/ The figures for Madras are startling: in the decade from 1921-1931 there were approximately 170,000 converts to Islam, most of whom were drawn from the Depressed Classes; this is two and a half percent of the total population of the Depressed Classes of Madras in 1921. 50/

It is only in the north of India that converts to Sikhism have been at all numerous. Many of the Depressed Classes of the Punjab have become Sikhs. In that Province, from 1921 to 1931 the number of Sikhs increased above expectation by 542,576 and a large number of these people are no doubt from the Depressed Classes. 51/ Figures for a few castes show a great increase in the number of Sikhs since 1921. For example, in 1921 only 42,476 Chuhra returned Sikhism as their religion; in 1931, there were 169,247 listed as belonging to this caste. 51-a/

Christianity from the days of the first missionaries, has attracted large numbers of untouchables. The program of social and

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economic uplift adopted by the missionaries was largely responsible. In 1931 there were roughly 6 million Indian Christians exclusive of Europeans and those from the tribal areas. There is no doubt that the majority of these have been drawn from the Depressed Classes. As might be expected the Christians are most numerous in the south of India, where the disabilities of the untouchables are more pronounced than in the north. Mass movements to Christianity are not a new phenomenon and recent figures give some indication of their scope. From 1921-31 in Travancore there were 100,000 converts to Christianity, of which it has been estimated 70,000 were members of the four largest depressed castes. During the same period in Madras there were 275,000 converts, practically all from the Depressed Classes.

Though none of these three religions in theory at least recognizes caste distinctions and untouchability, in practice conversion does not always have the effect of removing caste disabilities.

Islam in India has, of course, been considerably influenced by Hindu social customs. There are among Muslims "caste distinctions which indicate social status as clearly as they do in Hindu society." ^{52/} It is therefore inevitable that the members of the Depressed Classes converted to Islam should be assigned to a low place in the Muslim social system. Generally speaking, however, they are not regarded as untouchables and their religious disabilities at any rate entirely disappear.

The community of Sikhs cannot be said to be altogether free from caste distinctions. The sect known as the Mazbi Sikhs consists largely of descendants of converted sweepers. These are enlisted in the Sikh Pioneer Regiment but not in other Sikh class regiments as Sikhs of higher class usually object to serving with them. ^{53/} Even today Chuhras, Chamars, and other low castes tend to join this sect of the Sikhs. ^{54/} On the basis of the information available it is impossible to say whether or not the general status of the Depressed Classes is improved by conversion to Sikhism.

As far as Christians are concerned, "Caste is admittedly observed by Catholics, while some Protestants who profess not to admit it do admit a ban on commensality, and the Catholics appear to use caste marks in some cases, and there was a cause celebre in the Madras courts in which an ever-zealous imported priest, who had destroyed as unchristian the wall which ran the length of the aisle to separate the caste from the outcaste Christians, was prosecuted by his flock in consequence." ^{55/} Other instances of the persistence of caste distinctions are numerous. The Times of India for February 19, 1937 reported that at Kumbakonam in Madras Presidency rioting occurred when caste Catholics refused to permit outcaste Catholics to sit with them in church. In 1928 a deputation from the Christian Depressed Classes waited upon the Indian Statutory Commission and demanded special representation in the legislatures for Depressed Christians, claiming that as soon as they became Christian they were oppressed by the caste Christians. In certain parts of India, notably Travancore, Gujarat, and parts of the Deccan, it is said that Christians descended from the Depressed Classes are denied access to village wells, schools, etc., just as are the non-Christian members of this group.

On the whole, however, it is probably safe to say that, although disabilities may continue for some time, conversion does eventually lead to improvement in status.

Recently in 1935 a new impetus was given to the Depressed Classes to change their religion when Ambedkar called upon the low castes to abandon Hinduism and embrace another religion. This seems to have been more in the nature of a threat to caste Hindus than a serious suggestion for the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar stated at the

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time that he would not advise his followers to take any definite step for a period of four or five years, during which he would see how successful were the efforts of caste Hindus to purge Hinduism of untouchability. Some statements from a handbill addressed to the Depressed Classes of Hyderabad by the Ambedkar Yuvajana Samaj (Ambedkar Youth Association), though of doubtful importance, are interesting in this connection. In spite of the society's name Ambedkar probably had little responsibility in the matter.

"(2) If you want to recover the manhood you have lost, change your religion.

(14) The religion that teaches that to treat some people as human beings is sin against God is no religion; it is a poisonous disease.

(15) The religion that encourages one to handle animals but teaches that it is polluting to touch certain men is no religion; it is a bundle of evil principles.

(18) Hindu society teaches that God resides in every living thing and at the same time treats human beings as less than animals. Leave it. Hindus are hypocrites. Beware.

(19) Hindu society gives sugar to ants and milk to snakes but to thirsting men never a drop of water. Leave it. Hindus are first class hypocrites." 55-a/

Actually the response to Ambedkar's suggestion has been more marked among the leaders of non-Hindu religions than among the Depressed Classes. Muslims and Christians especially have repeatedly invited Ambedkar and his followers to join them. So far Ambedkar has taken no definite step in the direction of any religion.

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IV. DEPRESSED CLASSES AS A POLITICAL MINORITY

The prominent position occupied today by the Depressed Classes as the second largest minority in India has, like the entire minority problem, a comparatively recent origin. The present status of this group is due to the interaction of several forces in Indian social and political life. These are (1) the policy of the Government of India which has operated so as to foster separatist tendencies in the Indian population; (2) the efforts of the Indian National Congress on the one hand to unify the various elements in India in order to present a united front in the struggle for independence, and on the other hand, under Gandhi's leadership, to resist all attempts to weaken or divide the Hindu religious community; (3) the communal interests of the Hindu Mahasabha and the consequent opposition of this group to any program which would diminish its numerical strength; (4) attempts on the part of the Depressed Classes themselves to rise in the social scale by means of political power.

A. The Depressed Classes and the Government of India.

It may be said that the history of the minority problem begins in 1909 with the Minto-Morley Reforms, under which the legislative councils for the first time contained a substantial representative element. It was at this time that separate electorates were created for the Muslim community. However, these reforms gave no special recognition to the Depressed Classes.

1. The Depressed Classes under the Government of India Act of 1919. Under the Government of India Act of 1919 embodying the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals, a larger measure of self-government was conceded, legislative councils were greatly expanded, and the proportion of elected members increased to 70 percent of the total. The nature of the franchise, based chiefly on property qualifications, was such, however, that it was considered impossible to secure by means of election a sufficient number of representatives from the lower castes. Therefore in order to accomplish this the Act provided for their representation by nomination. The number of members nominated to represent these castes in the legislative councils differed from province to province. In accordance with the electoral rules Madras appointed five; Bihar and Orissa and the Central Provinces and Berar, two each; Bengal, Bombay, and the United Provinces, one each; in Assam the Depressed Classes and Backward Tracts (areas inhabited chiefly by primitive tribes) together were represented by one nominated member. No provision was made for representation of the Depressed Classes in the Punjab. Although the Act did not specify that the Depressed Classes be represented in the Central Legislative Assembly, in practice one of the seats filled by nomination was assigned to this group. M.C. Rajah from Madras was nominated in 1927 and remained a member of the Assembly until 1937. There was no representative of the Depressed Classes in the Council of State.

It should be noted that the provincial governors were not required to select their nominees from the ranks of the Depressed Classes. In Bihar, for example, the nominated members were "believed to be in sympathy with the class, though not as a rule actually of that class." 56/ In a few councils members of the Depressed Classes were able to secure seats through the general elections. A Chamar (leather-worker) was elected to the first Council of the Central Provinces under the 1919 Act, his success being attributed to the fact that competition was slight on account of the boycott of the elections by the Indian National Congress; and several members of the Bengal Councils belonged to the Depressed Classes.

2. Work of the Reforms Enquiry Committee. The Reforms Enquiry Committee appointed at the instance of the British Labour Government in 1924 to study the working of the Government of India under the 1919 Act

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made certain recommendations regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes. This committee, composed of ten members, was divided in its opinion as to the significance of the findings and the proposals to be made. The majority report recommended an increase in the number of Depressed Class representatives in the provincial councils. It was proposed that representation be by election if the local governments could formulate a method of election; that otherwise the system of nomination be continued. The minority report contained the following recommendation: "As regards the representation of the depressed and working classes, we are of the opinion that the correct principle to follow would be to lower the franchise so as to give them a chance, through the open door of election in general electorates; but where practical considerations point to a different conclusion, we would suggest that for the next few years only special constituencies might be formed for them." 57/ The recommendations adopted at this time, however, were those contained in the majority report. None of the provincial governments being able to propose a scheme whereby the Depressed Classes might elect their own representatives, an increase in the number of members nominated was the sole alternative and even this measure was adopted by some of the provinces only. In Madras the number was increased from five to ten, in Bombay from one to two, in the Central Provinces and Berar from two to four. The United Provinces Government were "opposed to any increase in the number of nominated members to represent these classes and they were of the opinion that the time had not come for any widening of the general electorate so as to admit the members of these classes to the franchise." 58/ The Government of Bihar and Orissa stated that the "filling of the existing two seats by nomination has always presented great difficulty and an increase of nominated members might well have been misconstrued as an attempt to strengthen support for Government." 59/ Bengal likewise did not increase the number of representatives for these classes.

To summarize, the Government of India under the Act of 1919, recognized the desirability of special representation for the Depressed Classes and implemented this by the nomination of members to the Legislative Councils and the Central Assembly. In the field of local government also this principle was widely adopted and nomination was the most common method of securing representation of the Depressed Classes on municipal and district Boards.

3. Indian Statutory Commission and the Depressed Classes. The Government of India Act of 1919 provided for a commission to be appointed at the end of ten years to study the system of government and to report concerning modifications to be made. The Indian Statutory Commission, as this was called, investigated conditions in India and their recommendations to a large extent formed the basis for the Act of 1935 under which India is governed today.

In the course of their inquiry the Commission received memoranda submitted by the Government of India and that of each governor's province, reports of committees appointed by the provincial legislative councils; and in addition they obtained evidence from a number of non-official sources.

In regard to the question of the Depressed Classes the Government of India referred the Commission to the separate provincial governments, most of which proposed measures to secure the representation of the Depressed Classes in the legislatures. The principle of nomination as it had been applied under the Act of 1919 was favored by Bihar and Orissa, Bengal, Madras, and the United Provinces, generally on the grounds that no other means of securing their representation was feasible. The Government of Bihar and Orissa considered that the Depressed Classes were too scattered and unorganized to be formed into constituencies and probably too backward to choose their own representatives. The Government of Bengal qualified their decision by stating that nomination should be resorted to only if a "suitable" electorate could not be devised. Apparently satisfied with the

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results of the nomination system, the Government of Madras stated that "the nomination of members of these classes...has sufficed in matters in which they were specially concerned to compel parties to canvass their votes and even to support or initiate measures affecting their social or other disabilities. 60/ The Government of the United Provinces proposed to nominate five members to represent the Depressed Classes and other backward classes on the grounds that these sections of the population were unable to look after their own interests. No suggestions for the representation of the Depressed Classes were made by the Government of Bombay as a whole. Two of the members favored indirect election for all communities and proposed that three separate constituencies be created in the three divisions of the presidency. Four seats were to be reserved for the Depressed Classes in these three constituencies, a number which was based on the percentage of voters from the community, although the estimated total population entitled them to six seats. The Government of Assam likewise advocated separate constituencies, two in the Surma Valley for backward classes and six in the Assam valley for the primitive tribes and the backward or Depressed Classes. According to the proposals of the Government of the Punjab, the franchise was to be considerably lowered and it was considered that under these new circumstances the Depressed Classes would be able to secure representation in the agricultural tenant vote. Further than this the Government of the Punjab did not concern itself with the Depressed Classes. The official attitude is summed up in the following statement: "They do not constitute a special problem in this province and it would be difficult to suggest any satisfactory electorate for them. As a result of these considerations we would exclude them." 61/

The proposals of the committees appointed by the various provincial legislative councils did not differ substantially from those put forth by the provincial governments. The Madras Committee considered that constituencies for the Depressed Classes, if formed, would be too large in view of the number of seats that could be allotted to this group, and favored a modified form of nomination. Out of regard for the wishes of the Depressed Classes who desired an element of election at some stage, the committee recommended that Depressed Classes associations in the various districts of the province elect twice as many candidates as were required from which panel the governor should select his nominees. The Bombay Committee, like the Government of Bombay, favored the system of reserving seats in certain constituencies where the Depressed Classes were numerous. However, they proposed to reserve ten seats, instead of four, in ten constituencies. The Bengal Committee seems to have been rather uninterested in the whole problem. Representation by nomination was advocated, if special constituencies could not be created. The committee had been unable to "probe the possibilities of doing this". The United Provinces Committee followed closely the suggestions made by one member, Rama Charana, who in an unofficial capacity submitted a memorandum to the Indian Statutory Commission on behalf of the Depressed Classes in which his demands were more extreme. The Legislative Committee proposed to reserve fifteen seats for the Depressed Classes to be filled by nomination. This arrangement was to last for ten years only at the end of which special constituencies were to be created if it was found that the Depressed Classes could not secure representation in the general constituencies. In the majority report of the Punjab Committee no specific suggestions regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes were made. The Committee, however, recommended that members be nominated to represent sections or interests which were otherwise unrepresented in the legislatures. The formation of separate constituencies for the Depressed Classes, if there were "no insuperable difficulties," was advocated by the Bihar and Orissa Committee, the members of which declared themselves against the principle of nomination for any purpose. Furthermore they were of the opinion that the number of legislators to represent the Depressed Classes should be "suitably" increased.

It must be noted that all these provincial committees in making proposals for the representation of the Depressed Classes had in mind a

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very restricted franchise based on property and educational qualifications. With the exception of Bihar and Orissa and Madras, all committees favored a wider franchise than obtained under the Act of 1919, but the extent of the franchise proposed was still too limited to enable the Depressed Classes to return their candidates in general elections. The committee appointed by the Assam Legislative Council, however, favored universal suffrage for all persons not less than 25 years of age, for the reason, among others, that it made unnecessary arrangements for special representation of backward communities. It was further recommended by this committee that the governor be empowered to nominate five members to the legislative council as a method of ensuring adequate representation of communities or classes which had been unable to obtain it through election.

In addition to these official proposals, the Indian Statutory Commission received memoranda and heard evidence from a number of associations and persons interested in the welfare of the Depressed Classes. Only Bihar and Orissa, the Punjab, and Assam were unrepresented by non-official bodies.

The Bengal Depressed Classes Association and the All-Bengal Namasudra Association agreed in demanding (1) adult franchise and (2) separate electorates with seats reserved on the basis of the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the total population. It was claimed that the Depressed Classes of Bengal numbered eleven and a half millions. These societies justified their demand for separate electorates on the grounds that previous experience had proved that in joint electorates they had no chance of returning their own candidates; they accused the caste Hindus of having put up an "illiterate cobbler" to represent the Depressed Classes in order to disgrace the group.

From Madras two associations presented claims which have in common only an insistence on reserved seats. The committee appointed by a conference of the Depressed Classes of the Madras Presidency considered that the Depressed Classes men would require training for some years in local self-governing institutions before being given the privilege of voting for the legislative council. It was proposed that the Madras Provincial Depressed Classes Federation elect representatives from the Depressed Classes, and that the persons so selected be nominated by the governor to the council. The ten seats reserved for the Depressed Classes were to be increased to eighteen, so that representation would be proportionate to their numerical strength in the province. With regard to representation in local bodies, this organization suggested separate electorates with lower franchise qualifications for the Depressed Classes than for the rest of the population. The All-India Adi-Dravida Maha Jana Sabha (General Association of Adi-Dravidas) together with the Madras Arundhathi Maha Jana Sabha requested that in the legislative councils one-fourth of the seats be reserved for the Depressed Classes, which, they claimed, were one-sixth of the total population. It was proposed to fill these seats half by governor's nomination and half by election through separate electorates. These two societies also asked for separate electorates and adult franchise for securing representation in local bodies.

On behalf of the Depressed Classes of Bombay, the Depressed Classes Institute of Bombay and the Depressed India Association submitted memoranda to the Statutory Commission. The first of these societies, represented by Mr. Ambedkar, demanded that twenty-two seats out of one hundred and forty be reserved in the legislative council. This was seven more than the Depressed Classes of Bombay would have had on a proportionate basis. Election was to take place in general constituencies on the basis of a lowered franchise. However, in oral examination Ambedkar stated that unless adult franchise was granted, he was in favor of separate electorates. The Depressed India Association wanted one-ninth (fifteen) of the seats to be reserved for the Depressed Classes, half to be filled by nomination, half by election. They advocated separate electorates for the municipal and district boards with adult suffrage for the Depressed Classes only.

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Memoranda concerning the Depressed Classes of the United Provinces were submitted by private individuals as well as associations. Rama Charana, a member of the Legislative Council, asked for separate electorates, while Ram Prasad Ahir, also M.L.C., wanted reserved seats to be filled by nomination. The All-India Shri Jatav Mahasabha, a society of Chamars, likewise wanted seats reserved. This group did not specify the manner in which the seats were to be filled. The memorandum requested the members of the commission to "judge for yourselves as to whether or not there was any connection between the system of separate electorates and the present communal unrest in India, and in the light of that opinion to decide whether it would be to the advantage of the Depressed Classes to have a separate electorate for themselves." 62/ The Kahar Sudharak Mahasabha, an organization of Shudras (the lowest of the four main castes), who considered themselves depressed though touchable (the Kahars were not included with the Depressed Classes in the 1931 census) demanded 60 percent representation to be secured by means of "separate electorates or by Electoral College System or by proportional representation in all the representative bodies." 63/

The All-India Depressed Classes Association, claiming to represent the Depressed Classes of India as a whole, proposed that the franchise be on the basis of an annual income of Rs.96 (\$28.80); and that separate electorates be established for the four major communities (Brahmans, Muslims, Depressed Classes, and Non-Brahmans), with the number of representatives from each community in proportion to its population. For the Central Provinces and Berar, however, it was recommended that for a period of twenty years persons selected by the Association be nominated to the central and provincial legislatures to represent the Depressed Classes.

On the basis of the demands and proposals presented by the provincial governments, the committees appointed by the provincial legislative councils, and the various non-official organizations, the Indian Statutory Commission had to consider three alternative means of providing for representation of the Depressed Classes in governing bodies: (1) nomination; (2) election of members in general electorates; (3) election in separate electorates or in special territorial constituencies.

In making their recommendations the members of the Commission considered each of the alternatives. Nomination of representatives was rejected on the ground that under this system the Depressed Classes would have no opportunities for training in self-government. Separate electorates, although retained for the Muslim community, were not recommended for the Depressed Classes. The views of the Commission on this subject are worth quoting: "Separate electorates would no doubt be the safest method of securing the return of an adequate number of persons who enjoy the confidence of the Depressed Classes, but we are averse from stereotyping the differences between the Depressed Classes and the remainder of the Hindus by such a step which we consider would introduce a new and serious bar to their ultimate political amalgamation with others. Such a course would be all the more difficult to justify in those provinces where the breaking down of barriers has advanced furthest. If separate electorates have to be maintained for certain classes which have already secured them, that is no reason for bringing other cases within this mode of treatment, if it can be avoided. A separate electorate means, as a preliminary, a precise definition of all who are covered by the term, and the boundary would be in some cases difficult to draw. It means stigmatising each individual voter in the list, and militates against the process which is already beginning, and which needs to be in every way encouraged--that of helping those who are depressed to rise in the social and economic scale." 64/ The possibility of forming special constituencies for the Depressed Classes is not discussed by the Commission. Since there is not in practice a great deal of

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difference between separate electorates and special territorial constituencies it may be assumed that the same objections led the Commission to reject this method.

The Commission proposed to reserve seats for the Depressed Classes in general constituencies, to be filled by election on the basis of a generally lowered franchise. In order to ensure the return of suitable representatives for the Depressed Classes, it was recommended that rules be made, according to which candidates for election would be certified by the provincial governors, where necessary or possible after consultation with Depressed Class organizations. The governor was also to be empowered, in the event of an insufficiency of suitable candidates, to authorize persons to stand for election who, though not members of the Depressed Classes, were interested in their welfare, or to nominate them to the legislative council to fill the reserved seats. Because of the fact that the Commission was doubtful as to whether a sufficient number of adequately equipped representatives would be available if seats were reserved for the Depressed Classes according to their percentage of the population, it was proposed that "the proportion of the number of such reserved seats to the total number of seats in all the Indian general constituencies should be three-quarters of the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the total population of the electoral area of the province. 65/

These measures were conceived by the Commission as temporary expedients only and it was hoped that eventually the Depressed Classes would achieve a status which would make unnecessary any such safeguards.

Acting more or less independently of the Indian Statutory Commission, the Indian Central Committee, appointed by the Viceroy and consisting of five members from the Assembly and four from the Council of State, presented a report shortly after the publication of that of the Indian Statutory Commission. In this report communal electorates were condemned except in a few "exceptional cases," among which were the Depressed Classes of Madras. 66/

4. The Round Table Conferences and the Minority Problem. In November 1930, shortly after the publication of these reports, the first Round Table Conference met in London to consider the proposals. Representatives of the various groups and interests in British India and the native states were invited in the hope that the discussions would lead to an agreement on the main provisions to be embodied in the proposed constitution. At this, as well as subsequent conferences, the minority problem was of paramount importance and a sub-committee with Prime Minister MacDonald as chairman was set up to consider the demands of the various groups.

The Depressed Classes were of course only one of many communities presenting claims for special consideration, but from the point of view of numbers at least they were second in importance only to the Muslims. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Rai Bahadur R. Srinivasan represented the Depressed Classes. On behalf of this group they demanded adequate representation in both legislatures, adult suffrage, and separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. The system of separate electorates was to last for ten years, after which, if the Depressed Classes consented, and if all adults were enfranchised, electorates were to be joint with reserved seats. 67/ For various reasons little if anything was accomplished at this first conference, and the sub-committee on minorities was unable to reach any agreement.

The second Round Table Conference met eight months later. This time Gandhi was present as the representative of the Indian National Congress. Ambedkar and Srinivasan as before represented the Depressed Classes. Once again the treatment of minorities proved to be an insuperable obstacle in the way of a settlement. The difficulty seems to have been due in part to the attitude adopted by Gandhi who claimed to speak

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for all elements in the country and denied that the spokesmen for the minority groups were truly representative, on the ground that they were not the elected representatives of the various parties but merely nominees of Government. According to Subhas Chandra Bose, Ambedkar "wanted to come to an agreement with the Mahatma whereby a certain number of seats would be reserved in the legislatures for the Depressed Classes on the basis of a common electorate for all sections of the Hindus. At that time the Mahatma would not think of any such compromise." 68/ Meanwhile Gandhi had adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the Muslims promising not to oppose their demands provided they voted against separate electorates for the other minorities. But the Muslims rejected this offer. As a result of all this Ambedkar and Srinivasan cooperated with the Muslims, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, and Europeans in jointly demanding separate electorates for all these minority groups. With regard to the Depressed Classes it was stipulated that a change to joint electorates and reserved seats should not be made until after twenty years, and until adult suffrage for the community should be established. Neither Hindu nor Sikh representatives agreed to these proposals and the minorities committee again reported that it had been unable to arrive at a solution to the problem. The Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, who was chairman of the committee, offered to mediate provided every member of the committee agreed to abide by his decision. The members did not agree to this but it was on the basis of this offer that MacDonald made the Communal Award in 1932.

5. The Communal Award and the Poona Pact. Shortly after the Round Table Conference was adjourned the Lothian Committee arrived in India to determine the franchise and electoral seats. In March 1932 Gandhi wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare, then Secretary of State for India, that he would fast unto death if Government decided to give separate electorates to the Depressed Classes. Hoare replied that nothing could be settled until the Lothian Committee made its report. MacDonald's decision, which became known as the Communal Award, was announced in August 1932. Paragraph 9 of this decision reads:

"Members of the 'depressed classes' qualified to vote will vote in a general constituency. In view of the fact that for a considerable period these classes would be unlikely, by this means alone, to secure any adequate representation in the legislature, a number of special seats will be assigned to them as shown in the table. These seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the 'depressed classes' electorally qualified will be entitled to vote. Any person voting in such a special constituency will, as stated above, be also entitled to vote in a general constituency. It is intended that these constituencies should be formed in selected areas where the depressed classes are most numerous, and that except in Madras, they should not cover the whole area of the province.

"In Bengal it seems possible that in some general constituencies a majority of the voters will belong to the depressed classes. Accordingly, pending further investigation, no number has been fixed for the members to be returned from the special depressed class constituencies in that Province. It is intended to secure that the depressed classes should obtain not less than 10 seats in the Bengal Legislature.

"The precise definition in each Province of those who (if electorally qualified) will be entitled to vote in the special depressed class constituencies has not yet been finally determined. It will be based as a rule on the general principles advocated in the Franchise Committee's Report. Modification may, however, be found necessary in some Provinces in Northern India where the application of the general criteria of untouchability might result in a definition unsuitable in some respects to the special conditions of the Province.

"His Majesty's Government do not consider that these special depressed classes constituencies will be required for more than a limited time. They intend that the constitution shall provide that they shall come to an end after 20 years if they have not previously been abolished under the general powers of electoral revision referred to in paragraph 6." 69/

The provisions made for the Depressed Classes differed in two respects from the communal electorates for Muslims and other communities. In the first place the Depressed Classes were to vote in general as well as in special constituencies. Secondly, the special constituencies except in Madras were not to cover the whole area of the province.

Seats were to be reserved for the Depressed Classes as follows:

Madras	18
Bombay	10
Bengal	(to be settled later)
United Provinces	12
Punjab	0
Bihar and Orissa	7
Central Provinces	10
Assam	4
North West Frontier Province	0
Sind	0

The Award met with considerable criticism in India. None of the parties interested in the Depressed Classes was pleased. Ambedkar considered that the number of seats reserved was too small; Rajah, leader of another faction of the Depressed Classes, objected to the separation of the group from the main body of Hindus. Gandhi was not appreciative of the differences between special constituencies and communal electorates. He wrote to MacDonald, "The mere fact of the depressed classes having double votes does not protect them or Hindu society in general from being disrupted. In the establishment of a separate electorate at all for the depressed classes, I sense the injection of a poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the depressed classes. You will please permit me to say that, no matter how sympathetic you may be, you cannot come to a correct decision on a matter of such vital and religious importance to the parties concerned. I should not be against even over-representation of the depressed classes. What I am against is their statutory separation, even in a limited form, from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it." 70/

In accordance with his previously announced decision Gandhi began to fast, and as a result a compromise was reached. Gandhi and the Depressed Class leaders formulated the Poona Pact whereby special constituencies for the Depressed Classes were abolished, while the number of seats reserved for them in the provincial legislatures was increased. In addition to this the Depressed Classes were given a certain percentage of the general seats in the Federal Assembly.

6. The Depressed Classes Under the Government of India Act of 1935. The Government of India Act of 1935, embodying the terms of the Poona Pact, provides for the nomination of four candidates for each seat in the provincial legislature, in a primary election by Depressed Class voters only. The final election of members is by joint election with caste Hindus. There are no reserved seats for the Depressed Classes in the provincial legislative councils. These upper chambers were established in only five provinces--Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces, and Bihar. A certain number of seats in the councils are filled by governor's nominations, an arrangement intended to secure representatives of the Depressed Classes and women. 71/

According to the First Schedule of the 1935 Act election of the representatives of Depressed Classes to the Federal Assembly is as follows: "(a) There shall be a primary electorate consisting of all persons who were successful candidates at the primary elections held, in accordance with the provisions of the Fifth Schedule of this Act, on the occasion of the last general election of members of the Legislative Assembly of the Province for the purpose of selecting candidates for seats reserved for members of the scheduled castes; (b) the primary electorate so constituted shall choose such number of persons as is equal to four times the number of general seats in the Federal Assembly reserved in the Province for members of the scheduled castes; and (c) no person who is not so chosen shall be qualified to be chosen to fill such a seat." 72/ The final electorates for the Federal Assembly in all cases consists of the members of the provincial assembly so that the Depressed Classes candidates are elected by all members who hold general seats.

The following tables (IV and V) reproduced from the Government of India Act of 1935 give the number of seats for all communities in the federal and provincial assemblies.

Since federation has not yet come into effect, the present composition of the Central Assembly and the Council of State is not according to the provisions of the 1935 Act. In respect of these bodies the 1919 Act still holds: the Depressed Classes have one nominated representative in the Assembly who at the present time is Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj; there is no representative in the Council of State.

7. Further Developments Affecting the Depressed Classes as a Minority. In addition to the establishment of separate electorates or other mechanisms whereby the Indian minority groups are enabled to return their own representatives to the legislatures, the Government of India has recognized certain minorities as separate groups in recruitment to all services under their administration. The principle of communal representation in the services was first recognized in 1925 when a resolution was adopted according to which one-third of all vacancies was reserved for redress of communal inequalities. None of the minority groups were satisfied with this method. The memoranda submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission on behalf of the Depressed Classes without exception demanded that the right of the Depressed Classes to a share in the services be recognized. Ambedkar, for example, demanded that the Depressed Classes be given priority for 30 years in recruitment to all posts.

In 1934 the rights of certain minorities to a share in the appointments to the various services was specifically recognized by a resolution of the Government of India. The communities declared to be minorities by this resolution were Muslims, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, Sikhs, and Parsees. The Depressed Classes were not included, nor were they given any fixed proportion of the annual vacancies. However, it was arranged that "duly qualified" members of the Depressed Classes might be nominated to the services even though ordinarily recruitment was by competition.

It has recently been reported that the Government of India has reached a decision to "declare the Scheduled Castes a Minority for the purposes of recruitment to Government services other than the Central Services such as the Indian Civil Service. A definite quota will be allotted to the Scheduled Castes for the purposes of recruitment to Government employ, both under the Central and Provincial Governments. The question of allotting a percentage in the Central Services is now engaging the attention of the authorities here." 73/

IV. TABLE OF SEATS
The Federal Assembly
Representatives of British India.

	General Seats:--		Total of general Seats	Sikh Seats	Muham- madan Seats	Anglo- Indian Seats	Euro- pean Seats	Indian Christian Seats	Seats for repre- senta- tives of com- merce and industry	Land holders seats	Seats for repre- senta- tives of labor	Women's Seats
	Total Seats	General seats reserved for Sche- duled castes										
Madras	37	19	4	--	8	1	1	2	2	1	1	2
Bombay	30	13	2	--	6	1	1	1	3	1	2	2
Bengal	37	10	3	--	17	1	1	1	3	1	2	2
United Provinces	37	19	3	--	12	1	1	1	--	1	1	1
Punjab	30	6	1	6	14	--	1	1	--	1	--	1
Bihar	30	16	2	--	9	--	1	1	--	1	1	1
Central Provinces and Berar	15	9	2	--	3	--	--	--	--	1	1	1
Assam	10	4	1	--	3	--	1	1	--	--	1	--
North-West Frontier Province	5	1	--	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Orissa	5	4	1	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Sind	5	1	--	--	3	--	1	--	--	--	--	--
British Baluchistan	1	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Delhi	2	1	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Ajmer-Merwara	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Coorg	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Non-Provincial Seats	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	--	1	--
Totals	250	105	19	6	82	4	8	8	11	7	10	9

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B. The Depressed Classes and the Indian National Congress.

1. Congress Policy and Program up to 1937. The Indian National Congress as a political body is not primarily interested in social reform. This is due to the fact that its energies are mainly directed towards gaining independence. Furthermore a majority of the Congress leaders come from the middle and upper classes and are not revolutionary in outlook; these among them such as Pandit Nehru, who hold more advanced opinions regarding Indian social problems consider freedom and independence necessary preliminaries to effective reforms. To Gandhi's personal influence and the British Government's recognition of the Depressed Classes as a separate group in Indian society may be attributed the fact that Congress has devoted a considerable part of its energies to Depressed Class problems.

As early as 1917 Congress adopted a resolution urging "upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon the Depressed Classes, the disabilities being of a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting those classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience." 74/ The date of this first resolution coincides with the visit of Mr. Montagu to India, at which time the question of the Depressed Classes "claimed the nation's attention as forming an important factor in national reconstruction." 75/

The meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held in Ahmadabad in 1921 called for volunteers for non-cooperation. The pledge to be taken by each volunteer included the following clause: "As a Hindu I believe in the justice and necessity of removing the evil of untouchability and shall on all possible occasions seek personal contact with, and endeavour to render service to, the submerged classes". 76/ Another resolution passed at the same time called on all Hindus who did not believe in non-cooperation to interest themselves in removing untouchability and in improving the condition of the Depressed Classes.

The following year the Congress working committee met at Bardoli. Civil disobedience was suspended and in its place a program of constructive work was proposed. "Constructive work" included among other things the removal of untouchability. 77/

Again in 1923 resolutions to remove untouchability were passed by the All-India Congress Committee in Nagpur. "Since then," Gandhi has written, "the Hindu members of the Congress have taken upon themselves the responsibility of ridding Hinduism of the curse of untouchability." 78/

Another resolution calling for the "amelioration" of the Depressed Classes was moved by Motilal Nehru at the All-India Congress Committee in 1926. 79/

More serious attempts to attack the problem of untouchability were made in 1928. It seems a reasonable inference that Congress was influenced by the activities at this time of the Indian Statutory Commission. In the program laid down it was stated that, "It shall be the duty of all Congressmen, being Hindus, to do all they can to remove untouchability and help the so-called untouchables in every possible way in their attempt to remove their disabilities and better their condition." 80/

As a further step a committee was formed to carry on a campaign against untouchability. As a result of its efforts a number of temples, wells, and schools were made available for use by the Depressed Classes.

In 1931, shortly before the Round Table Conference was to meet in London to consider the future constitution of India, the

Congress working committee issued a statement on the communal question. Although no mention was made of the Depressed Classes several references to the minority problem are of interest. In one section it is declared that: "Protection of political and other rights of minority communities in the various Provinces shall be the concern and be within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government". 81/ The statement called for adult suffrage or at least a franchise sufficiently extensive to "reflect in the electoral roll the proportion in the population of every community"; 82/ and for joint electorates. All communities were to have a fair share in the public services, and the rights of minorities in the formation of ministries were to be recognized by convention. At the same time, the anti-untouchability committee, appointed in 1928, and dissolved after two years, was revived. 83/

The general views of the Congress regarding questions of caste are set forth in the resolutions on Fundamental Rights and Duties adopted in the same year. The following sections of the resolutions are pertinent;

"(4) All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of caste, creed or sex.

(5) No disability attaches to any citizen, by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honor, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.

(6) All citizens have equal rights and duties in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public resort, maintained out of State or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public." 84/

The part played by Gandhi as the representative of the Congress at the Round Table Conference, and the subsequent events at Poona leading to the Poona Pact, have already been discussed.

Although Gandhi had for a long time been a champion of the Depressed Classes, after the Poona Pact he increased his efforts on their behalf. In 1933 and 1934 he spent ten months in a tour of India for the purpose of studying the problem of untouchability. Under his leadership the movement concentrated on religious uplift. He has written: "In my opinion it [temple entry] is a deciding test as to whether the orthodox Hindu mind has responded to the call of time or not and whether it is prepared to purge Hinduism of the black mark of untouchability. Nothing in my opinion will strike the imagination of the Hindu mind including Harijans as throwing open all public temples to them precisely on the same terms as caste Hindus." 85/

In recent years a number of temples have been opened to the untouchables in Indian States as well as in British India, but there is not much evidence that the general condition of the Depressed Classes is materially improved. The most prominent of the Depressed Class leaders, Ambedkar, has minimized the effectiveness of this type of reform in the total picture. He has said, "As regards temple entry, the Depressed Classes all over India have made it clear to Mr. Gandhi that they will have nothing to do with it regarded as a final solution to the problem of the removal of untouchability. They would accept it only if Mr. Gandhi would make it clear that it was the first step in a general reform of Hindu society involving the breakup of the caste system." 86/

Other features of the program of reform at this time include public inter dining and the opening of village wells to the Depressed Classes. But one observer has written, "These events seem to partake more of the nature of indulgent concessions to a popular leader than

of logical, sincere steps in a well-ordered program of reform. Perhaps this was inevitable in view of the coercive force of Gandhi's fasts, but the fact remains that most of the wells so thrown open to public use were later quietly brought back into the category of restricted utilities, and most programs of intercaste dining inaugurated with public feasting ended where they began." 87/

In spite of the fact that evidences of material benefit to the Depressed Classes are not very apparent, there can be no doubt that Gandhi and, largely through his efforts, the Indian National Congress have enormous influence over the depressed masses. Ambedkar himself does not underestimate the power of Gandhi's hold over the untouchables.

Figures to show the Depressed Class membership in the Congress Party are not available, although it is known that large numbers from this group belong to the Party. Some indication of the strength of the Congress Party among the untouchables is afforded by the success of Congress candidates in contesting the seats reserved for the Depressed Classes in the 1937 elections. The following table shows the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the number won by Congress candidates. It will be remembered that in Sind and the Northwest Frontier Province there are no seats reserved for this group.

<u>Province</u>	<u>Seats Reserved for the Scheduled Castes</u>	<u>No. of Seats won by Congress</u>
United Provinces	20	17
Assam	7	1
Central Provinces and Berar	20	8
Bengal	30	3
Orissa	6	4
Madras	30	27
Punjab	8	1
Bombay	15	3
Bihar	15	15
	<u>151</u>	<u>79</u>

Insofar as there are only 1,780,085 members of the Depressed Classes entitled to vote under the present franchise, the significance of these figures is lessened. Strictly speaking the figures indicate only the strength of the Congress Party among the small enfranchised section of the group. Furthermore the Congress Party was far better organized and equipped to fight the elections than any other. It is suggestive that in Bombay where Ambedkar had built up among the Depressed Classes the Independent Labour Party, his candidates won 12 out of the 15 reserved seats. However, many of the successful non-Congress candidates representing the Depressed Classes later supported the Congress Party in the legislatures, especially in Assam and Bengal. 88/

2. Implementation of the Congress Program, 1937-39. In the 1937 elections Congress won a majority in seven of the provinces. The Party leaders accepted the invitation to form ministries in the provinces where they were in majority only after it was understood that the

provincial governors would not make use of their special powers except in unusual circumstances. Although, according to the Instrument of Instructions the governors were enjoined to see that in each ministry the minorities were represented, under the agreement Congress was given free rein in this matter. This was a live issue in 1937, and the Depressed Class leaders who had been returned to the legislatures on the Congress Party ticket met and passed a resolution to be put before the All-India Congress Committee. It was resolved that "in case the Congress decides to accept office at least one minister and one secretary should be taken in the cabinet from the scheduled caste Congress members in the provinces where the Congress Party forms a ministry." 89/ However, only four ministers from the Depressed Classes were selected. One of these was in Madras, one in Bihar, and two in Assam. (Congress, lacking a majority in Assam, formed a coalition ministry in that Province). In addition four parliamentary secretaries were members of the Depressed Classes: two in the United Provinces, one in Bihar, and one in Madras.

The best indication of the attitude of Congress towards the Depressed Classes are the acts concerning this group passed by the Congress governments. Congress ministries remained in power until November 1939. During this period the following acts were passed:

Madras 1938. Act No. XX was passed to remove the disabilities of certain classes of Hindus in regard to entry into temples in the district of Malabar. This Act provides that if the trustees of a temple receive a requisition signed by 50 Hindu voters (other than those from the Depressed Classes) from the general constituency in which the temple is situated, they shall forward this to the provincial government, which shall then direct the trustees to refer the matter to the voters (other than those belonging to the Depressed Classes) in the constituency, and that if the majority is in favor of opening the temple to the Depressed Classes the trustees shall publish an order to that effect.

Madras 1938. Act No. XXI provides for the removal of civil disabilities among certain classes of Hindus. Paragraph no. 2 of this act states:

"Notwithstanding any law, custom, usage or prescription to the contrary, no Hindu shall, by reason merely of his belonging to any particular community or Class known as Harijans, Untouchables, Depressed Class or the like, be prevented or disabled from being appointed to any public office or enjoying or having access to any public stream, river, well, tank, pathway, sanitary convenience, or means of transport or any secular institution which the general public belonging to all other classes and communities of Hindus have a right to enjoy or have access to or which is dedicated or maintained or licensed for the use of the general public or paid for out of the funds of the State or a local authority; and no Civil, Criminal or Revenue Court in adjudicating any matter or executing any order and no public or local authority in carrying on the affairs entrusted to such authority shall recognize any custom, usage or prescription under which it is sought to impose any civil disability on any person by reason of his belonging to any of the classes or communities aforesaid, or by reason of any acts or omissions on the part of such person which would not furnish grounds for such disability if he did not belong to such class or community." 20/

Madras 1939. Act No. XXII,

"to authorize and indemnify trustees, officers and other persons in respect of entry into and offer of worship in Hindu temples by certain classes of Hindus who by custom or usage are excluded from such entry and worship." 21/

According to this Act, if in the opinion of the trustee, or a majority of the trustees, the worshippers of a temple are generally not opposed to opening the temple to hitherto excluded castes, the trustee may with the consent of the Madras Government declare the temple open to these castes. Under the terms of the Act no suit for damages can be brought against any trustee or other person in authority who, in accordance with the Act, opens the temple to the Depressed Classes.

Events preceding the passing of these Acts in Madras provide an interesting commentary on the relations between Congress and the Depressed Classes. About the time of Gandhi's first fast for the untouchables in 1932, Mr. Kelappan who had been working for the Harijan cause in Malabar, decided to fast in order to persuade the trustees of the Guruvayur Temple in Malabar to open it to the untouchables. Gandhi succeeded in convincing Kelappan that his fast was ethically improper because insufficient notice had been given to the trustees. Kelappan thereupon issued an ultimatum to the trustees which was to expire in three months. Before the time was up a vote was taken and, the majority voting in favor, the temple was opened. 92/

Towards the end of November 1937, the Malabar Temple Entry Conference held at Guruvayur called upon the Congress Ministry to enact legislation permitting temples to be thrown open throughout the province. Mr. Kellappan threatened, if this was not accomplished in 6 months, to start satyagraha. Rajagopalachariar and other ministers of Madras temporized, claiming that public opinion in all districts of the province was not as favorable to such a step as it was in Malabar. 93/

In 1938 M. C. Rajah proposed a bill to give "every congregation of Hindu worshippers the right to decide the question of opening the temples to Harijans...the bill sought to enable Hindu opinion, when it became liberal enough to be translated into action, to express itself without legal impediment." 94/ This bill was also opposed by Rajagopalachariar, although he had himself endeavoured to get an identical bill passed in the Central Legislative Assembly 6 years previously. Rajah was asked to withdraw his bill in favor of one with more limited jurisdiction. This attitude on the part of the Congress Ministers angered Rajah. He accused the Harijan members of the Congress Party of voting against his bill and publicly declared himself in favor of the separate electorates for the Depressed Classes that he had formerly opposed. 95/

The acts passed by the Madras Ministry may be considered as the Congress solution to the problem.

In the Central Provinces, during the Congress term of office, there were two acts passed which concern the Depressed Classes.

Central Provinces Act XXXI of 1939 undertakes to abolish nominations to local bodies and to secure at the same time representation to Harijans, Muslims and women. This act applies to municipal committees and provides that, if a Harijan, a Muslim, or a woman is not elected to the committee, the elected members of the committee shall select a member of the community in question, and if they fail to do so, one shall be nominated by the provincial government.

Central Provinces 1939 Act XXXII amends the Central Provinces Local Self-Government Act of 1920, and secures representation of Harijans, etc., on local bodies such as local boards and district councils by means of the method adopted for municipal committees.

Bombay and Bengal each passed one Act dealing with the Depressed Classes.

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Bombay 1939 Act XI. The Bombay Harijan Temple Worship Act.

Bengal 1939 Act XI was passed to "restore separate electorates for Muslims in constituencies of the Calcutta Corporation, provide for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and representation of the Anglo-Indian community and Labour." 96/

3. Criticism of Congress by Depressed Class Leaders. Congress ministries remained in power for only two years, and perhaps this is not an unimpressive list for such a short period. However, Ambedkar and other Depressed Class leaders have been consistently critical of Congress' efforts. Ambedkar in a speech to the Depressed Classes of Ahmadabad in October 1938 is reported to have said that he had no faith that Mahatma Gandhi or the Congress would do any good to the Harijans. He advised them to form a separate organization and to have nothing to do with the Congress movement. 97/

The charges against Congress made by Ambedkar at this time seem somewhat unreasonable. He accused Gandhi of refusing at the Round Table Conference to agree to a reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes, and criticized him for not urging the Congress Party leaders to include Harijan ministers in all the provincial cabinets. He claimed that the Bombay Ministry had done nothing to carry out the recommendations made by the committee to enquire into the condition of the Depressed Classes in the Presidency, appointed by the previous government.

It is true of course, that Gandhi at the Round Table Conference held out against reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes, but as this was achieved by the Poona Pact, there seems little point to Ambedkar's criticism. In regard to the inclusion of Harijans in the provincial cabinets, as has already been noted, there were either ministers or parliamentary secretaries or both, in three out of the seven provinces where the Congress Party formed ministries in 1937; and in the non-Congress Province of Assam, the Congress Party formed a coalition ministry in which there were two Depressed Class ministers. In the other four provinces -- Orissa, Central Provinces, Bombay, and the Northwest Frontier Province -- it is true that there were no representatives of the Depressed Classes in the ministries. However, in the Northwest Frontier Province the number of Depressed Classes was infinitesimal according to the 1931 census, and in the 1941 census the population of this group is recorded as nil; nor are there any seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes in this province. In Bombay Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party captured 12 of the 15 reserved seats; and as he and his party were entirely opposed to the Congress Party and its program, it is difficult to see how the Congress leaders could be expected to include his candidates in the Bombay Ministry. In the two remaining Congress provinces, Central Provinces and Orissa, there is possibly some ground for Ambedkar's complaint. It may be that suitable members from the Depressed Classes were not available, but in the absence of definite information no conclusion can be drawn. It is perhaps worthy of note that the Times of India, March 22, 1937 reported that "a prominent Congress leader let it be known that under no circumstances would it be necessary for a member of the Scheduled Castes to sit in the Cabinet as Congress fully represented the interests of these people." The most that can be said at this point by way of criticism of the Congress Party is that in view of the feeling over the matter it would have been wise of Congress to include a Depressed Class member in all cabinets if this had been in any way possible. The contention that the Bombay Government failed to put into effect measures proposed by the previous government has been emphatically denied by a member of the committee.

4. Present Attitude of Congress. The present attitude of the Congress toward the Depressed Classes as a separate group is not clear. Gandhi seems willing to recognize the need for special treatment of the Harijans. In a statement responding to a speech made by Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons on October 26, 1939, Gandhi, declaring that Indian minorities were able to take care of their own interests, made an exception of the Depressed Classes. ^{98/} Nehru has gone even farther. A letter addressed to Dr. Sudhir Sen of the Sriniketan Vishwabharti in May 1940 expressed the Congress solution to the minority problem in general: "The Congress is prepared to give the minorities the amplest guarantees, both in regard to mutually agreed fundamental laws of the constitution and in regard to the framing of the constitution itself. Any minority may get its representatives elected by a separate electorate. In all matters strictly pertaining to minority rights, decisions should be by consent of the parties and not merely by a majority of votes. In the event of an agreement not being arrived at on any particular point, the matters may be referred for impartial international arbitration to the League of Nations, or the Hague Court, or any other such body." ^{99/}

C. Depressed Classes and Hindus.

There have been in the past occasional and ineffectual movements for the uplift of untouchables but, by the majority of Hindus, their condition has been accepted as inevitable and, according to the tenets of Hinduism, part of the natural order of society. During the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th several reformist movements developed within Hinduism. Of these, the Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, and the Arya Samaj had a considerable interest in social reform along various lines. All of them condemned the caste system in theory, and some missionary work among the Depressed Classes was carried out, but the practical value of their efforts is questionable. The work of the Depressed Classes Mission Society founded in 1906 has been more effective. Aiming to elevate the social as well as the spiritual condition of the Depressed Classes, the society, according to its own report, has devoted itself to promoting education, providing work, remedying the social disabilities, and preaching the principles of liberal religion, personal character, and good citizenship. In accordance with this program most of the society's work has been along educational lines.

1. Depressed Classes and the Hindu Mahasabha. The recent prominence of the Depressed Classes as a politically important minority has led to an increased interest in this group on the part of the caste Hindus. The Hindu Mahasabha, founded about 1917, although moderately nationalist, is chiefly concerned with preserving the Hindu hegemony in Indian political life. Therefore it views with alarm the prospect of losing a large part of its potential strength in any Hindu-Muslim conflict. The Mahasabha has consistently endeavored to conciliate the Depressed Classes and at the same time has resisted all attempts to separate the Depressed Classes from the main body of Hindus. The program of the Hindu Mahasabha set forth as one of its aims the "amelioration of the condition of all classes of Hindus including the Depressed Classes", ^{100/} and resolutions have been passed from time to time condemning untouchability. In 1936 the Mahasabha recommended to Hindus the "abolition of all distinctions in the Hindu society based on birth or caste in the sphere of public, social and political life in which such distinctions ought to have no application and are out of date in the present age." ^{101/} At the same time the Mahasabha recommended giving "equal access to all Hindus irrespective of their particular caste or creed to all public amenities and institutions such as schools, wells, tanks, ghats, places of water supply, hotels, roads, parks, dharamshalas [rest houses] and public places of worship, burning ghats and the like."

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In the field of politics the attitude of the Hindu Mahasabha has been one of antagonism towards all separate electorates. At the Round Table Conferences the representatives of the Mahasabha favored joint electorates with safeguards for minorities if necessary. Shortly before the Communal Award was announced Dr. Moonje, one of the most prominent members of the Mahasabha, and M.C. Rajah, head of the Depressed Classes Association, came to an agreement according to which the Depressed Classes were to have seats reserved in the legislatures in proportion to their strength in the population. It is the opinion of one authority that this agreement was not recognized by the Government because of Ambedkar's opposition. 102/ At any rate, the Rajah-Moonje Pact, as it was called, was superseded by the Poona Pact in which Mahasabha leaders, chiefly Pandit Malaviya, had important influence.

In the enthusiasm following Gandhi's fast in protest against the Communal Award, the entire Hindu section of India joined in condemning untouchability. At a public meeting over which Pandit Malaviya presided, it was resolved that all public wells, dharamshalas, roads, schools, crematoriums, burning ghats, etc., be declared open to the Depressed Classes and that all public temples be made available for their use. An All-India Anti-Untouchability League was founded at the same time.

Members of the Hindu Mahasabha have gone to considerable lengths to avoid antagonizing the Depressed Class leaders. When in 1935 Ambedkar threatened to advise the Harijans to give up Hinduism and embrace another religion, Dr. Moonje made no objection. However he did urge Ambedkar to go over to Sikhism in preference to any other faith and promised that if this was done all the concessions obtained for the Depressed Classes under the Poona Pact would be continued. 103/ The working committee of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1939 condemned separate electorates in general but stated as their opinion, that the Depressed Classes "should be given weightage or reservation and special protection for a definite period of time". 104/

2. Hostility of Orthodox Hinduism. While the Mahasabha has been following a policy of conciliation, a few unimportant elements in Hindu society have been frankly hostile to any movement designed to alter the status of the Depressed Classes. The All-India Varnasram Swaraj Sangha is pledged to uphold the caste system and all caste distinctions including untouchability. 105/ The Madras provincial branch of this organization in 1937 sent a telegram to Nehru stating that Sanatanists (advocates of orthodoxy) in Madras would support Congress in all political matters if Congress gave a pledge not to introduce any bill opposed to Hindu religious, social, or socio-religious practices in the legislatures and to oppose those brought by others. Needless to say, Nehru refused to give such a pledge. 106/

Generally speaking, it may be said that the Hindus as a body are alive to the need for remedying the evils of the caste system. However, the Mahasabha, which is the only politically important Hindu group, is extremely conservative. Whether its members contemplate any such radical change in Hindu society as is necessary for real amelioration of the Depressed Classes is very doubtful.

D. Depressed Class Leaders and Parties.

The organization of the Depressed Classes is a recent development in the political life of India. When in 1917 Mr. Montagu received deputations in the course of his study of conditions in India, only one Depressed Class organization offered evidence. Since that time innumerable Depressed Class societies have sprung up. Most of these are local organizations with a small membership and very limited influence, either in national or class affairs. They have

been hampered by lack of funds, and the low standard of education among the Depressed Classes generally has hindered the growth of strong and effective organizations. That a few of them have achieved importance in all-India affairs is due to the ability and political acumen of their leaders.

1. B. R. Ambedkar. The most outstanding of the Depressed Class leaders is Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, a member of the Mahar caste in Bombay. While still a small boy his unusual abilities attracted the attention of the Gaekwar of Baroda, who financed his education and sent him eventually to Columbia University from which he received the degree of Ph.D. in 1917. After further study at the University of Bonn in Germany he went to London University where he took a degree in economics. In 1923 he was called to the bar and for some years had a successful law practice in Bombay. His interests are wide and his publications include the Problem of the Rupee, Evolution of Provincial Finance in India, Caste in India, Small Holdings and Their Remedies, Federation vs. Freedom, and Thoughts on Pakistan. Since 1928 he has played a prominent part in political affairs. At that time, as a nominated member of the Bombay Legislative Council he was one of the committee appointed by the Council to submit a report to the Indian Statutory Commission, and, as the president of the Depressed Classes Institute of Bombay, he presented a memorandum to the Commission on behalf of the Depressed Classes. Later he was selected by the Government to represent the Depressed Classes at the Round Table Conferences in London. In 1936 he founded the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.), the membership of which is drawn largely from the Depressed Classes, though it is not limited to this group. Candidates put up by this party had considerable success in the 1937 elections in Bombay. 107/ Of fifteen Depressed Classes members in the Legislative Assembly, twelve belonged to I.L.P. 108/ Ambedkar was appointed a member to represent labor on the National Defense Council which was set up in 1941. A year later he was given the labor portfolio in the Viceroy's Executive Council, which post he now holds.

It is impossible accurately to estimate the extent of Ambedkar's influence among the Depressed Classes. His own claim that the untouchables all over India accept his leadership is very probably highly exaggerated. Competent observers generally agree that Ambedkar's following is limited to the Mahars of Bombay and the Central Provinces. The members of this caste, to which Ambedkar belongs, in these two provinces number about 2,050,000. If all of these support him, and assuming that an equal number from other castes accept his leadership, 5,000,000, or about one-tenth of all the Depressed Classes is probably a fair estimate of his following. There is little doubt that his influence is growing, but unbiassed opinion holds that as long as Mahatma Gandhi lives, Ambedkar "will find it next to impossible to awaken very large numbers of the Depressed Classes." 109/

As a leader of the Depressed Classes Ambedkar's efforts have been consistently to obtain political power as a means of raising the status of this group. Early in his career he seems to have believed that only in an independent India would the Depressed Classes have an opportunity of obtaining political power. His presidential address to the All-India Depressed Classes Congress in 1930 expresses this view:

"Before the British you were in the loathsome condition due to your untouchability. Has the British Government done anything to remove your untouchability? Before the British you could not draw water from the village well. Has the British Government secured you the right to the well? Before the British you could not enter the temple. Can you enter

now? Before the British you were denied entry into the police force. Does the British Government admit you in the force? Before the British you were not allowed to serve in the military. Is that career now open to you? Gentlemen, to none of these questions you can give an affirmative answer. Those who have held so much power over the country for such a long time must have done some good. But there is certainly no fundamental improvement in your position. So far as you are concerned, the British Government has accepted the arrangements as it found them and has preserved them faithfully in the manner of the Chinese tailor who, when given an old coat as a pattern, produced with pride an exact replica, rents, patches and all. Your wrongs have remained as open sores and they have not been righted

"Nobody can remove your grievances as well as you can, and you cannot remove them unless you get political power in your own hands. No share of this political power can come to you so long as the British Government remains as it is. It is only in a Swaraj constitution that you stand any chance of getting the political power into your own hands without which you cannot bring salvation to your people." 110/

Since 1930 Ambedkar's attitude has somewhat altered, and he recently stated that British rule is preferable to self-government with the Indian National Congress in power. Ambedkar's grudge against the Congress goes back of course to the Round Table Conference and the quarrel with Gandhi over the question of representation of the Depressed Classes. Although the Poona Pact gave the Depressed Classes considerably more than the Communal Award, it did nothing to increase Ambedkar's confidence in the Congress or in Gandhi. At present Ambedkar attributes his distrust of Congress to the fact that Congress ministers discriminated against the minorities during the years they were in power. He has said:

"It is an unfortunate fact that the Congress during its term of office in a majority of provinces should have given cause for this distrust. One does not wish to be censorious about the doings of the Congress during the period it was in office. But there was one act about which there can be no dispute, namely, the exclusion of the minorities from the provincial cabinets. It was not only wrong but a breach of faith and anyone who knows what happened at the Round Table Conference will remember that representation in the cabinet was one of the liveliest issues between the Congress and the minorities. The minorities insisted that the right to representation in the cabinet should be guaranteed to them in the statute. The Congress insisted that it be left to convention. Ultimately a via media was found and that was to insert a clause in the Instrument of Instructions issued to the Governors directing them to see that the minorities were represented in the cabinet.

"Unfortunately when the Congress decided to take office, it made it a condition that the Governor should not exercise his discretionary powers to overrule the Congress ministry...The Congress then proceeded to deny the right of representation in the cabinet which the minorities were hoping would be recognized by the Congress. As I said it was this gross breach of faith which was responsible for the rise of the Muslim League and the mistrust that exists today between the minorities and the Hindu majority," 111/

Actually, Ambedkar's attitude toward the Congress is due to the fact that, rightly or wrongly, he identifies Congress as a body

with the Hindus. "It is for this reason that he accuses Congress of being socially reactionary, and declares that the untouchables can hope for nothing from a Congress-controlled government. 112/ Since Congress is by far the strongest political group in the country Ambedkar is unwilling to have the British withdraw unless the grant of Indian independence contains safeguards for the Depressed Classes. Regarding the present situation in India, Ambedkar wholeheartedly supports the British war effort. He has strongly condemned the activities of Congress since August 1942, and has declared his approval of Government's action in arresting the Congress leaders.

Ambedkar's efforts were originally directed towards raising the status of the Depressed Classes within the Hindu group. Politically this meant favoring a system of joint electorates. In 1928 as a member of the Bombay Legislative Committee he submitted a report to the Indian Statutory Commission in which he set forth his views on separate electorates. He sums up a strong and cogent argument by stating that "the case for communal electorates cannot be sustained on any ground which can be said to be reasonable". 113/ At the same time in a memorandum submitted to the Commission on behalf of the Depressed Classes he declared himself in favor of joint electorates, although in oral discussion with members of the Commission he qualified this by stating that unless adult suffrage was granted he preferred separate electorates. It was, as we have seen, the refusal of Gandhi at the Round Table Conference to agree to the reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes that led Ambedkar to join the Muslims in demanding separate electorates for all minorities. Although he accepted the compromise of the Poona Pact, regretting only that Gandhi had not taken the same ~~stand~~ at the Round Table Conference, he was not altogether satisfied with the method of electing Depressed Class representatives, on the ground that the primary election was an expensive business. Shortly after the Pact had been made he proposed to Gandhi that it be modified to provide for only one election, "with the understanding that a Depressed Class candidate could not be elected unless he secured a certain fixed proportion of the votes of his own community." 114/ Gandhi did not agree to this and the terms of the original Pact still hold.

Corresponding to Ambedkar's growing conviction that only through complete separation from the Hindu group can the Depressed Classes win political power, is the change in his social program. In the beginning, he endeavored to raise the status of the Depressed Classes within the Hindu group. Although he warned Gandhi that temple entry was not enough, for a number of years he himself was interested in this question. From 1929 to 1935 he and his followers yearly offered satyagraha at Nasik (Bombay Province) to assert their right to participate in the temple procession. 115/ However, he grew impatient with the progress made by Hindu social reformers in the fight against untouchability and in 1935 advised the Depressed Classes to leave the Hindu fold and embrace any religion which offered them equal social status with other communities. A few members of the community were converted to Islam and a few to Sikhism, but the vast majority took no action whatsoever.

Ambedkar's present stand on the religious question is doubtful. His henchman, Mr. Sivaraj, in private conversation, gives the impression that Ambedkar is no longer interested in having the Depressed Classes as a body join another religion. It seems likely that Ambedkar, having achieved a considerable measure of success as champion of the political rights of the Depressed Classes, is now unwilling to have them merged with any other group. Under the present system of separate electorates for the various religious communities, the Depressed Classes would lose their political identity if they became Muslims, Sikhs, or Christians.

2. Ambedkar's Present Program. The most drastic step in the direction of separation from the Hindus was taken on Ambedkar's recommendation by the All-India Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur in July, 1942. A resolution was passed declaring that no constitution would be acceptable to the Depressed Classes unless:

- (1) it had the consent of the Depressed Classes; (2) it recognized that the Depressed Classes are separate from the Hindus and constitute an important element in the National life of the country; (3) it contained provisions which would give a sense of security to the Depressed Classes. These provisions are:

"(1) That in the budget of every Provincial Government an annual sum as may be determined upon by agreement be set apart for promoting the primary education among the children of the Scheduled Castes and another annual sum for promoting advanced education among them and such sums shall be declared to be the first charge on the revenues of the Province.

(2) The provision shall be made by law for securing representation to the Scheduled Castes in all Executive Governments, Central and Provincial, the proportion of which shall be determined in accordance with their number, their needs and their importance.

(3) That provision shall be made by law for securing representation to the Scheduled Castes in the Public services the proportion of which shall be fixed in accordance with their numbers, their needs and their importance. This conference further insists that in the case of security services such as Judiciary, Police and Revenue, provision shall be made that the proportion fixed for the Scheduled Castes shall, subject to the rule of minimum qualifications, be realized within a period of ten years.

(4) That provision shall be made by law for guaranteeing to the Scheduled Castes representation in all Legislatures and Local Bodies in accordance with their number, needs and importance.

(5) That provision shall be made by law whereby the representation of the Scheduled Castes in all Legislatures and Local Bodies be by the method of Separate Electorates.

(6) That provision shall be made by law for the representation of the Scheduled Castes on all Public Service Commissions, Central and Provincial."

The fourth resolution passed at the Nagpur Conference contains a demand for separate Depressed Classes settlements.

"It is the considered opinion of this conference,

- (a) that so long as the Scheduled Castes continue to live on the outskirts of the Hindu village, with no source of livelihood and in small number as compared to Hindus, they will continue to remain untouchables and subject to the tyranny and oppression of the Hindus and will not be able to enjoy free and full life;
- (b) that for the protection of the Scheduled Castes from the tyranny and oppression of the Caste Hindus, which may take a worse form under Swaraj, which cannot but be a Hindu Raj, and (c) to enable the Scheduled Castes to develop to their fullest manhood, to give them economical and social security as also to pave the way for the removal of untouchability.

"This conference has after long and mature deliberation come to the conclusion that a radical change must be made in the

village system now prevalent in India and which is the parent of all the ills from which the Scheduled Castes are suffering for so many centuries at the hands of the Hindus. Realizing the necessity of these changes this conference holds that along with the Constitutional changes in the system of Government there must be a change in the village system now prevalent made along the following lines:

(1) The constitution should provide for the transfer of the Scheduled Castes from their present habitation and constitute separate Scheduled Caste villages away from and independent of Hindu villages.

(2) For the settlement of the Scheduled Castes in new villages a provision shall be made by the constitution for the establishment of a settlement Commission.

(3) All Government land which is cultivable and which is not occupied shall be handed over to the Commission to be held in trust for the purpose of making new settlements of the Scheduled Castes.

(4) The Commission shall be empowered to purchase new land under the Land Acquisition Act from private owners to complete the scheme of settlement of the Scheduled Castes.

(5) The constitution shall provide that the Central Government shall grant to the Settlement Commission a minimum sum of rupees five crores [about \$15,000,000] per annum to enable the commission to carry out their duty in this behalf." 116/

It is difficult to say whether or not Ambedkar expects to have the demand for separate settlements taken at its face value. Possibly he hopes to use it as a means of winning concessions from the Hindus, as appears to have been the case with his suggestion that the untouchables abandon Hinduism and go over to another religion.

Probably of more immediate importance are his demands for special educational facilities for the Depressed Classes, and for their representation in the services. The recent memorandum to the British Government prepared by Ambedkar pressed both of these claims. Whereas the resolution passed by the Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur demanded that the Provincial Governments make provision for special education of the Depressed Classes, Ambedkar, in his memorandum to the British Government, demands that the Central Government set aside a sum of three lakhs, two to be used for scholarships for the Scheduled Castes students in science and technology in India, one for scientific and technological education in foreign universities. It seems reasonable to suppose that the recent grant of three lakhs (\$90,000), made by the Government of India for education of the untouchables, is a response to this demand; although the type of study to be pursued is not specified, two lakhs are set aside for foreign education (see p. 24). Similarly with the demand for representation in the services: the declaration by the Government that the Depressed Classes are to be regarded as a minority for the purpose of appointments to the services probably may be regarded as a response to Ambedkar's demand (see p. 38).

Two other grievances of which Ambedkar complained to the British Government have not yet been remedied. These refer to government publicity and government contracts. Ambedkar feels that during the past years insufficient publicity has been given to the activities of the Depressed Classes and to his own speeches. His memorandum refers specifically to the government publication entitled India and the Aggressors, The Trend of Indian Opinion between 1935-40, compiled by

the Bureau of Public Information, Government of India, and suggests that the Government bring out a supplement to the volume "giving full space to movements carried on by the Scheduled Castes and the pronouncements their leaders have made." 117/

With regard to government contracts for public work, Ambedkar complains that on the list of 1,170 approved contractors maintained by the Public Works Department, there is only one belonging to the Depressed Classes. He proposes that more be put on the list and, further, that the tenders submitted by the Depressed Class contractors, if not higher than the lowest by 5 percent, shall be considered the lowest to increase their chances of being awarded the contract.

3. M.C. Rajah. Another prominent leader of the Depressed Classes is M.C. Rajah. His All-India Adi-Dravida Maha Jana Sabha was one of the earliest associations for the advancement of the Depressed Classes. In 1917 as head of this society he submitted evidence on behalf of the Depressed Classes to Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford. For many years he represented this group, first as a member of the Madras Legislative Council from 1919 to 1926, and then of the Central Legislative Assembly from 1927-37.

Rajah and Ambedkar have never worked together, and Rajah has opposed nearly all of Ambedkar's measures to improve the position of the Depressed Classes. At the Round Table Conference he defended the system of joint electorates in opposition to Ambedkar's demand for separate electorates. Shortly after this he entered into an agreement with Moonje of the Hindu Mahasabha according to which seats were to be reserved for the Depressed Classes in proportion to their numbers.

After the Congress ministry in Madras refused to consider his bill for temple entry he became distrustful of Congress policy, and has since been advocating separate electorates. He has recently gone so far in an anti-Congress direction as to champion Jinnah. At a meeting held to celebrate Jinnah's birthday in January 1940, Rajah, who presided, said "that he considered Mr. Jinnah as the benefactor of the largest number of people of India in asserting the rights of the largest minority community in the country against the aggressive policy of the Congress, which claimed to act in the name of nationalism on behalf of the majority. By so doing, Mr. Jinnah was also defending the rights of the Depressed Classes, who formed the next largest minority community in the country." 118/

Rajah's recent demand for separate electorates has not resulted in collaboration with Ambedkar. At the present time Rajah's influence is probably restricted to Madras and in national affairs he has been outstripped by Ambedkar.

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V. THE FUTURE OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

The position of the Depressed Classes as a political minority appears to be already well-established. Since the indications are that this position will be strengthened rather than weakened, it is necessary to examine the possibilities for social and economic advancement by the Depressed Classes according to the methods proposed.

In the process of delimiting the Depressed Classes untouchability was taken as their distinguishing characteristic. The purpose of the delimitation was to determine what castes were entitled to special consideration and support by the Government. The conclusion may be drawn that it is the treatment suffered by the Depressed Classes at the hands of the Caste Hindus, in other words the fact of their untouchability, which qualifies this minority for special consideration. Ambedkar and other Depressed Class leaders likewise regard untouchability as the fundamental factor in the problem. The first question is, therefore, in how far the measures proposed or adopted for the welfare of the Depressed Classes will prove effective in abolishing untouchability.

Declaring the Depressed Classes a separate group for the purpose of electing members to the legislatures might conceivably induce the caste Hindus to abolish untouchability in the hope of winning their support. It is quite as likely, however, to have the opposite effect. Moreover, it is doubtful to what extent a small minority can press its demands in legislative bodies. Even in Madras, where the number of seats reserved for the Depressed Classes in proportion to the total number of seats is greater than in any other province, the Depressed Classes have only one-seventh of the seats. Furthermore, provided that acts are passed guaranteeing to the untouchables the right to enter temples, use public wells, roads, etc., the Depressed Classes are still in a poor position to take advantage of their rights in the face of adverse public opinion. It is probably safe to say that untouchability will not disappear from Indian society as a result of separate electorates.

Ambedkar has proposed separate settlements for the Depressed Classes primarily as a means of freeing them from untouchability. Segregating the Depressed Classes in villages of their own would lessen the amount of contact between them and caste Hindus, but such isolation would seem likely further to accentuate the feeling of outcaste in the minds of both caste Hindus and untouchables. Moreover, there is no reason to suppose that the Depressed Classes, though separate from the caste Hindus, would forget the caste distinctions and various degrees of untouchability that exist within their own ranks. These are quite as rigid and productive of friction as those between caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes. Even if a village was peopled solely with members of one caste it is probable that occupational groups with invidious distinctions would spring up after a generation or so.

The most reasonable answer to this first question, therefore, seems to be a negative one. Untouchability appears to be an inseparable part of the caste system as it exists in India today. It is, of course, intensified and the consequent disabilities are aggravated in the case of the Depressed Classes versus the caste Hindus. But in varying degree untouchability is characteristic of the relationship between any two castes, even though both are relatively high, or both relatively low. It is probably safe to state that only revolutionary changes in the entire caste system will abolish untouchability. There is some evidence that Ambedkar realizes this. He has criticized Gandhi for upholding the caste system; he himself wants to see caste in India abolished. Without doubt changes affecting the caste structure have taken place in recent times. These appear to be due to the conditions of modern life and the

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growth of democratic ideas and institutions. There is every chance that the development of industry and increased educational facilities will result in far-reaching alterations in the entire caste structure and consequently in the practice of untouchability.

Although untouchability has been the principle criterion in the delimitation of the Depressed Classes, the label "depressed" lends itself to an interpretation in economic as well as in social terms. The economic position of the Depressed Classes has already been discussed. Obviously if the delimitation had been on the basis of poverty and general backwardness the Depressed Classes would be not a minority but the only majority in India. Although the untouchables are, therefore, only a fraction of the economically depressed classes, a lack of material advantages is characteristic of the untouchables as a group. The 1931 Census Superintendent of Bengal regarded the economic condition of the Depressed Classes as their chief claim to special recognition: "The untouchables claim the special consideration of Government not qua untouchable, and governmental responsibility for them arises not from their social and religious disabilities, but from other conditions. These conditions would remain even if untouchability were removed. If it were possible to imagine caste Hindu society undergoing a universal change of heart and effectively admitting untouchables to all the privileges which are now denied them on religious grounds, they would still remain in poverty and ignorance and both their conditions of life and their mental outlook would still be deplorable. If every untouchable were forthwith invested with the sacred thread and given the status of a Brahman it would be a very long time before the class unaided could derive any benefit from its elevation. A spectacular removal of untouchability, if it were effective, would still leave the ex-untouchables in conditions entitling them to special consideration." 119/

It is necessary to consider in how far it is possible for the Depressed Classes to obtain economic advantages by the means proposed. It seems likely that the Depressed Classes have already profited and will continue to do so from their position as a separate group. Special funds have been set aside for the education of Depressed Class children by provincial governments and the Central Government. In several provinces land grants have been made. Recently the Government of India has declared that the Depressed Classes will receive a share of appointments to government service, and the economic status of at least a few members of the group will be improved thereby.

In the absence of any detailed information regarding Ambedkar's ideas for separate settlements it is impossible to do more than point to the fact that economically his plan represents merely a systematic extension of the policy of making land-grants already adopted in several provinces. It is doubtful whether this represents the ideal or even the best possible solution to the Depressed Classes' problem of poverty.

The position of the Depressed Classes as a political minority is already established. Ambedkar, who has demanded a separate electorate, wishes the line of separation to be even more clearly defined. It is not necessary here to consider whether or not the division of the population into various groups makes for the welfare and efficient government of India as a whole. But the question remains: Will the Depressed Classes benefit from their position as a minority group?

The answer seems to be that they will benefit economically to a certain extent and for a limited time. In so far as a rise in social status follows economic improvement, the Depressed Classes will also benefit socially. On the other hand, there are disadvantages inherent in the minority system for the minority itself. M.N. Dalal has called attention to one danger of a separate electorate for the group concerned: "Once separate electorates are established...the

separate representation thus assured will tend to become the maximum the community thus safeguarded can hope to obtain. It will, therefore, reflect the maximum of their strength in the legislature, and through that, in all departments of government that the legislature can influence. This means not only a fixed maximum share in the services, but also in all other economic advantages, which influence in government through the legislatures. There can be no hope for more than this fixed share." 120/

Above all, the separation of the Depressed Classes from the general population means that they are cut off from those groups with which they have common interests, namely the agriculturalists and industrial workers. Separate electorates would mean that a Depressed Class worker in a Bombay factory would vote not as a worker but as a member of the Depressed Classes; he would vote for a representative of his interests as an untouchable rather than as a worker. Since the future welfare of the Depressed Classes is obviously bound up with that of the rest of the Indian population, particularly with that of the peasants and workers, there is a danger that a separate electorate will defeat the ends envisaged by the Depressed Class leaders.

THE DEPRESSED CLASSES OF INDIA

FOOTNOTES

1. Discussion which follows is based on G.S. Ghurye, Caste and Race in India (London 1932).
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3. Ibid., loc. cit.
4. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 5: Bengal, pt. I, pp. 496-97.
5. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 18: United Provinces, pt. I, p. 627.
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8. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 3: Assam, pt. I, p. 210.
9. L.S.S. O'Malley, India's Social Heritage (Oxford 1934), p. 46.
10. University of Madras Economic Studies, Vol. 1: Some South Indian Villages, Gilbert Slater, Ed. (London 1918), p. 11.
11. A General Report on the Condition of the Slums of Madras, Madras Sanitary Welfare League, 1933, pp. 4, 5; quoted by C.W. Ranson, A City in Transition (Madras 1938), p. 116.
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13. Cf. M.L. Darling, Wisdom and Waste in the Punjab Village (London 1934), p. 277. Prices as of 1930-31.
14. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 10: Memorandum submitted by the Government of the Punjab (London 1930), p. 9.
15. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 18: United Provinces, pp. 629-630.
16. A.T. Fishman, Culture Change and the Underprivileged (Madras 1941), p. 142.
17. Report on an Inquiry into Working-Class Family Budgets in Bombay City, prepared by the Labour Office, Bombay (Bombay 1935), p. 3.
18. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 16, Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non-Officials (London 1930), pt. 1, pp. 56-57.
19. Royal Commission on Labour in India (London 1931), vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 15.
20. Ibid., vol. 7, pt. 1, p. 78.
21. Cf. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 17, Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence (London 1930), p. 277.
22. Cf. R. Suryanarayana Rao, "House Sites for the Depressed Classes," Servant of India, vol. 19 (1936), p. 190.
23. Madras Administration 1937-38 (Madras 1939), p. 141.

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24. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 21, Cochin, p. 293.
25. Madras Administration, op. cit., p. 142.
26. The material which follows is contained in a report from New Delhi in answer to certain questions submitted to the Office of the Personal Representative of the President of the United States. It is dated December 16, 1942.
- 26-a. See 26.
27. Madras Administration, op. cit., p. 66.
- 27-a. See 26.
28. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 14: Madras, p. 344.
29. Cf. L.S.S. O'Malley, op. cit., p. 47.
30. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. I, Survey, p. 396.
31. This figure is perhaps too high. In the Census of India, 1931, Vol. 18: United Provinces, p. 461, a statement, made by the Director of Public Instruction in the United Provinces Legislative Council, is quoted to the effect that 25,000 pupils from the Depressed Classes attended special schools, 88,000 ordinary schools.
32. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 8: Memorandum Submitted by the Government of Bengal, p. 55.
33. Pickett, J.W., Christian Mass Movements in India (New York 1935), p. 74.
34. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 16, Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non-Officials, pt. 1, p. 43.
35. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 1: Survey p. 396.
- 35-a. Figures taken from the Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1, p. 331.
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40. Cf. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1, p. 483.
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43. Madras Administration, op. cit., p. 142.
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48. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1: India, p. 484.
- 48-a. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 23: Hyderabad, p. 258.
49. M.T. Titus, Indian Islam (London 1930), p. 50.
50. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 14: Madras, p. 321.
51. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 17: Punjab, p. 306.
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53. L.S.S. O'Malley, India's Social Heritage, p. 42.
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60. Ibid., Vol. 6, Memorandum Submitted by the Government of Madras, p. 9.
61. Ibid., Vol. 10; Memorandum Submitted by the Government of the Punjab, p. 44.
62. Ibid., Vol. 16: Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non-Officials, pt. 1, p. 352.
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64. Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, vol. 2, p. 65.
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THE DEPRESSED CLASSES OF INDIA

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V. The Future of the Depressed Classes

I. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

A. Statement of the Problem

One of the obstacles to a settlement of the present political situation in India is the minority problem. The Indian population of roughly 390 millions is composed of several religious groups which form under the present constitution separate elements in the body politic. The most important of these are Hindus, Muslims, Indian Christians and Sikhs. The Hindus, having a population of about 256 millions, constitute the majority, while the other groups with their numbers falling far short of this, are, on a religious basis, permanent minorities.

In addition to religious minorities there are other groups based on a community of special interests which entitle them to separate representation in the legislatures. Thus, there are seats reserved for landholders, for representatives of labor, for representatives of commerce and industry, etc.

Another minority group is composed of primitive peoples, distinguished by racial and cultural differences from the rest of the population.

Different from all of these is the minority known as the Depressed Classes or Scheduled Castes. Hindu by religion, these castes are distinguished from Hindus in general by social disabilities and economic backwardness. Because of their common position in relation to members of the higher castes, these castes on the lowest levels of society may be considered one, more or less uniform, group. By virtue of their numbers they are second in importance only to the Muslims. Their leaders, like the Muslims, fear rule by the Hindu majority and state that they will not agree to a transfer of power on the part of the British unless the constitution provides safeguards for their welfare. Though their prominence in political affairs is recent, they are an increasingly powerful and vocal group. Due to the fact that the justice of their complaints and the legitimacy of their aims are admitted by everyone, no future government of India can fail to consider their position.

B. Nomenclature

Various names have been given to this group: Exterior Castes, a recent substitute for the old, unsatisfactory term "outcaste," and Panchama (Fifth), have reference to the fact that the group is exterior to the four principal castes; members of these low castes are Untouchables because they are a source of pollution to higher caste people; the name Depressed Classes is descriptive of their social and economic condition; under the term Scheduled Castes, Government segregates this group as a minority within the Hindu fold for the purposes of administration and representation; Gandhi refers to these people as Harijans (Children of God) to express his sympathy for their cause.

C. Origin and Development of the Depressed Classes

For our knowledge of the origin and development of the ideas and practices which resulted in the formation of the Depressed Classes, as indeed of the whole caste complex, we have to rely upon information afforded by the study of ancient Hindu literature. 1/

With regard to the social organization of pre-Aryan India we have no information. The Aryan settlements in North India took place probably between 1500 and 1200 B.C.; and the Vedic literature which tells us something of contemporary life and customs may be given the round date of 1000 B.C. The newcomers seem to have been impressed with the dark skins of their predecessors as compared with their own, and we

find passages in which the Aryan people are contrasted with the earlier population in respect to color, speech, religious practices, and physical features. Mention is made of four classes of society based on division of function, in addition to which are several groups described as degraded or despised. The most plausible interpretation of the material suggests that these last were groups of aborigines, though it is possible that some of them were composed of individuals of mixed descent for whom there was no place in the four classes.

For the period ending about the first century A.D. our information is more extensive. It is evident that by this time certain classes are definitely considered to be outcasts. They are called antyavasayin (those who dwell outside), and there exists additional proof that outcasts were segregated from the rest of the population. According to one source a class of people called Chandalas had to live beyond the burial grounds, and wells used by the general public were forbidden to them. The association of caste with hereditary occupation is well-defined and certain occupations are regarded as low while the castes engaged in them are of inferior status. The idea of untouchability is well-developed; outcasts, and specifically the Chandalas, by their touch or presence impart pollution to members of the first three castes.

The outstanding features which characterize the Depressed Classes in Hindu society today were evident in the eighth century A.D. Probably as a result of greater specialization of labor, the number of castes and sub-castes has increased, and each is associated with a hereditary occupation. Work is distinguished as pure or impure and the status of occupations fixed accordingly.

Among the outcaste groups are washermen, leather-workers, cane-workers and fishermen. One list of outcastes included the Bhils, a well-known aboriginal tribe of Central India. The Chandalas, previously mentioned only as a very low and degraded group, are evidently sweepers in this period as by one author a Chandala is enjoined to enter a village to sweep "during the first half of the day, carrying a broom under his armpit and a small pot hanging at his neck," probably to contain his spittle. Penalties and purification rites are prescribed for Brahmans who become defiled by contact with the untouchables. The purification, which consisted of living on cow's urine for a number of days, to be undergone by a Brahman who drank water from a Chandala's vessel indicates the attitude toward these unclean castes.

With but few exceptions the lot of the Depressed Classes seems to have been accepted until recent times by themselves and by the rest of the population as part of the natural order of society. As early as the twelfth century an attempt was made to improve the religious condition of these people. The philosopher Ramanuja effected a slight modification of the rules regarding temple entry and in some parts of India the untouchables were permitted to worship in the temples one day in the year. On the whole, however, their position socially, economically, and religiously continued to be depressed.

By way of summary it may be stated that of the factors contributing to the formation of the Depressed Classes three are of prime importance. (1) Due to historical circumstances, the Aryan-speaking people were brought into contact with groups which, because of differences in physical features and in social customs, they considered inferior to themselves. (2) The idea of purity for ceremonial purpose and the necessity for safeguarding this, favored the growth of theories that certain occupations and habits were unclean, and that people who followed them were a source of pollution to others. (3) Occupation, tending from very early times to be hereditary, became associated with caste, so that certain castes as a whole rather than unorganized groups of individuals came to be regarded as by nature degraded.

II. DELIMITATION OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

A. Criteria

The delimitation of the Depressed Classes as a group distinguished from the other elements of Hindu society depends upon the criteria selected. Castes are usually defined as depressed, the members of which (1) cause pollution either by touch or within a certain distance; (2) are denied access to Hindu temples; (3) are prohibited from drawing water from village wells.

(1) The idea that certain castes cause pollution, whether by touch or by their presence, depends directly on the fact that higher castes regard as impure people who follow unclean occupations, or whose habits are such as to cause disgust. Thus scavengers, leather-workers, washermen are considered degraded because of their occupations, while castes which make a practice of eating beef, carrion, or other foods taboo to orthodox Hindus are considered impure regardless of what occupation they follow.

The theory of pollution takes different forms in different parts of India. Generally speaking, in the north only direct contact with an impure person necessitates purification on the part of a higher caste individual. But even in the Punjab, for example "...in private buildings no caste Hindu would let a sweeper enter his residential room, not to speak of the latter ever dreaming of going into the kitchen. In many cases the shadow of a Chamar [leather-worker] or a Chuhra [sweeper] would pollute a caste Hindu if he happened to be in his own house but he would not mind such a thing in a playground or on a public road." 2/ Conditions in Madras may be taken as typical for southern India. There in addition to pollution by touch we find "distance pollution," according to which certain very low castes have to avoid approaching within a stated distance, varying from 24 to 64 feet. In Cochin for one caste, the Nayadis, the distance is, or was, 300 feet. To what extent such theories determine practice at the present time is difficult to say. Modern methods of travel, for example, make it impossible for the high castes to avoid contact with people whom they consider untouchable, and it is probably only in remote rural areas that a low-caste individual gets off the road on the approach of a member of a higher caste in order to avoid contaminating him.

Nevertheless many social conditions and taboos based on the principle of untouchability persist today. All over India the depressed castes occupy a separate part of the village and are segregated from the rest of the community. Children of Depressed Classes are still, in some areas, denied the right to attend schools along with those of the higher castes. Food and drink taboos which operate to prevent higher castes from accepting food or drinking water from the hands of people belonging to the Depressed Classes are still of great importance.

(2) As a direct result of the theory that unclean castes are a source of pollution, a number of castes are denied the right to enter the interior of Hindu temples on the ground that sacred places and objects must be protected from desecration. This restriction is usually more severe in the south of India than in the north. The Depressed Classes of Travancore are by definition those of which the members are not allowed to proceed beyond the outer walls; a number of other low castes whose members are allowed to penetrate as far as the first courtyard are considered to be only partially depressed, or "backward."

The denial of the right of temple entry, it must be noted, is a social as well as a religious disability. Hindu temples usually contain schools, from which the untouchable children are automatically debarred;

and in many cases the temple grounds include buildings which serve as a town or village hall.

(3) As in the matter of temple entry, unclean castes are prohibited from drawing water from the village well because they are considered to pollute it and to render it unfit for use by higher castes. Here again conditions vary according to the part of India under consideration. In the Punjab, where water is scarce "the scruples disappear in proportion as the difficulty to secure water increases. The untouchables usually have their own wells, but very often would take water from the water courses or wells or canals. In cases where the whole population depends on water stored in ponds they usually obtain it at a separate ghat at some distance from that of Caste Hindus." 3/ The Bengal Census Report for 1931 contains an excellent account of the modifications and variations of the general rules which are to be found in that province. "In certain areas the very lowest classes of scavengers, sweepers, etc., are not allowed to use the public wells, but in most cases the restriction does not exist at all, and where it exists, it is either dependent on the size or nature of the well or is overcome by some form of adjustment between the classes. In some districts, for instance, members of the sweeper classes are not allowed to use kacha [unmasoned] wells, but may use masonry wells, or they are excluded from wells with a diameter less than a certain distance (say 6 ft.) but are permitted to use wells larger than these. In some cases the higher castes, in a manner of speaking, take the disability upon themselves, and voluntarily leave certain wells exclusively to the lower castes; or the lower castes, when they wish to draw water, will not let down their own vessels or touch the vessel used for drawing the water by higher castes, but will wait beside the well till one of the higher castes fills their vessels". 4/

B. Classification

When it comes to deciding on the basis of these criteria what particular castes are to be included in the list of Depressed Classes, certain difficulties are encountered. Some of these difficulties are inherent in the criteria themselves. To begin with the practices centering around the concept of untouchability are not such that a line can be drawn clearly dividing touchables from untouchables. The difficulty of distinguishing the Depressed Classes from the rest of the population on the basis of such a criterion is discussed by the Census Superintendent of the United Provinces. The whole subject, he writes, "is much complicated by the fact that different castes and even the same caste in different localities have varying standards of untouchability. The average Brahman standard is naturally much higher than that of Kshattriyas and Vaishyas; that of Kshattriyas and Vaishyas is higher than that of the Sudra castes; and the standard and observance varies considerably even among Brahmans: the extremely orthodox will state that they regard all the Sudras and more humble castes...as untouchables whereas other Brahmans will include only those castes outside the four varnas [main caste groups], and even then will not strictly observe the rites for purification after contact." 5/ The situation is still more confused by the fact that untouchability exists among the depressed castes and there is scarcely any caste so low that its members do not consider themselves polluted by members of another caste. Hutton in the 1931 Census Report states: "Indeed as between different sections of the exterior castes prejudice is just as strong as between the interior and exterior castes generally. The Mahars in Bombay have objected to sharing their councils and conferences with Chamars and Mahars and Chamars have unanimously spurned the Bhangi." 6/ It is obvious that it is almost impossible to define one caste as untouchable and another as touchable when there is no absolute standard of reference.

With regard to the question of temple entry, and the use of village wells, the difficulties are of a different nature. The denial of

the right of certain castes to enter Hindu temples is clear enough, but there is in many areas a considerable amount of latitude in the application of the prohibition and frequent exceptions to the rule. This is especially true in the north of India and for this reason, the criterion of temple entry is often overlooked in the assignment of castes to the depressed group. The same objections have been made to the prohibition of the use of village wells as a criterion. Conditions prevailing in the Punjab and Bengal, for example, have already been discussed, and it is apparent that in many cases it cannot be said that castes classified as depressed are under any great disadvantage with regard to the use of wells.

Another problem lies in the definition of the term Hindu. Since non-Hindus, although they may be regarded as untouchable and refused entry to Hindu temples, are excluded from the Depressed Classes, the question arises, "what constitutes a Hindu?" The presence in India of large numbers of primitive peoples who, originally practicing religions of their own, have become more or less Hinduized gives the answer to this question more than academic importance, since almost invariably tribes of primitive origin enter the Hindu social system as depressed castes. Hinduism contains almost every shade of belief and a well-nigh all-inclusive range of practices, and to draw a line between it and primitive religions is sufficiently difficult. When, as has frequently happened, primitive tribes take Brahmans as priests, attach sanctity to the cow, and worship at Hindu temples, the line may be said to disappear, and the classification of the primitive tribes becomes a matter of doubt. Whether such tribes are listed as Depressed Hindu or Primitive often depends on nothing more objective than the opinion of the enumerator.

Finally, another criterion, adopted in practice if not in theory, for the classification of the Depressed Classes is that of economic condition. The definition of a depressed caste as one whose "social, economic and other circumstances are such that it will be unable to secure adequate representation of its political views or adequate protection of its interests without some form of special franchise concession," ^{7/} which was suggested for the purpose of determining the franchise, was not officially adopted for the census enumeration. Nevertheless, certain castes which are untouchable and subject to other restrictions are not included with the depressed castes because of their relatively high economic position. In Assam, for example, castes are classified as depressed "whose water is not acceptable and who, in addition are so deficient as castes in education, wealth and influence or, for some reason connected with their traditional occupations, are so looked down upon that there seems little hope of their being allowed by Hindu society to acquire any further social privileges within--at any rate--the next decade." ^{8/}

With the foregoing remarks as a preface, several general statements may be made regarding the classification of castes as depressed.

(1) A caste listed as depressed may be regarded by caste Hindus as untouchable; its members may be denied the right to enter Hindu temples; they may be forbidden to use village wells. It cannot be assumed, however, that any caste listed as depressed is laboring under all these disadvantages.

(2) A certain caste may be depressed in one section of India but not in another; and a caste that is treated as depressed in one part of a province is not necessarily so regarded in the whole area.

(3) Some castes which according to the criteria accepted should be listed as depressed are not included in the Depressed Classes. That this is the case is due to the fact that such castes are not economically backward.

Table 1, taken from the Census of India for 1931, gives the figures for the Depressed Classes by provinces and states.

Table I
(Census of India 1931. Vol. I, p. 494)

Province or State	Total Population	Total Hindu	Total Exterior Castes	Percentage of Exterior castes on--	
				Hindu Population	Total Population
INDIA	335,852,597	238,616,569	50,195,258	14	12
PROVINCES	256,754,589	177,149,417	39,063,497	15	12
Ajmer-Merwara	560,292	434,509	76,816	18	14
Assam	8,622,251	4,931,760	1,829,009	37	21
Baluchistan (Districts and Administered Territories)	463,508	41,432	5,702	14	1
Bengal	50,114,002	21,570,407	6,899,809	32	14
Bihar and Orissa	37,677,576	31,011,474	5,744,393	19	15
Bombay	21,854,866	16,621,221	1,750,424	11	8
Central Provinces and Berar	15,507,723	13,338,223	2,818,346	21	18
Coorg	163,327	146,007	24,803	17	15
Delhi	636,246	399,863	72,883	18	11
Madras	46,740,107	41,277,370	7,234,104	18	15
North-West Frontier Province	2,425,076	142,977	5,468	4	--
Punjab	23,580,852	6,328,588	1,279,459	20	5
United Provinces of Agra and Oudh	48,408,763	40,905,586	11,322,281	28	23
States and Agencies	79,098,088	61,467,152	11,131,761	18	14
Assam States	625,606	272,890	1,421	1	--
Baluchistan States	405,109	12,249	20	--	--
Baroda State	2,443,007	2,152,071	203,043	9	8
Bengal States	973,336	641,662	30,822	5	3
Bihar and Orissa States	4,652,007	4,194,878	631,864	15	14
Bombay States	4,468,396	3,921,088	348,574	9	8
Central India Agency	6,632,790	5,852,204	797,902	14	12
Central Provinces States	2,483,214	1,788,401	252,732	14	10
Gwalior State	3,523,070	3,271,576	678,119	21	19
Hyderabad State	14,436,148	12,176,727	2,473,230	20	17

Jammu and Kashmir State	3,646,243	1,736,222	170,928	23	5
Madras States Agency	6,754,484	4,323,150	1,960,370	45	29
Cochin State	1,205,016	780,484	125,339	16	10
Travancore State	5,095,973	3,134,888	1,769,755	56	35
Other Madras States	453,495	407,778	65,296	16	14
Mysore State	6,557,302	6,015,880	1,000,326	17	15
N.W. Frontier Province (Agencies and Tribal Areas)	46,451	13,651	542	4	1
Punjab States	437,787	383,883	94,347	25	22
Punjab States Agency	4,472,218	1,887,249	392,999	21	9
Rajputana Agency	11,225,712	9,578,805	1,565,409	16	14
Sikkim State	109,808	47,074	2,029	4	2
United Provinces States	1,206,070	950,724	208,864	22	17
Western India States Agency	3,999,250	3,245,768	318,220	10	8

A word may be said concerning the accuracy of these figures. Since under the present political system the Indian population is divided into a number of mutually exclusive groups forming separate electorates, the struggle for political power involves attempts on the part of each group to increase its numerical strength. Especially are the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs anxious to have their numbers as large as possible. In the 1931 census these three groups made strenuous efforts to persuade members of the depressed castes to return themselves as the canvassers desired. The Hindus, who not long ago refused to admit that the untouchables were Hindus, energetically started a campaign to persuade the Depressed Classes to return themselves as Hindus and to omit caste names or to return themselves as members of one of the three highest castes. It is quite likely that such practices were even more widespread when the 1941 census was taken. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were probably equally active in this respect. There is no doubt that there is some justification for the claim that the figures do not accurately represent the total number of untouchables in India. Dr. Ambedkar, one of the leaders of the Depressed Classes, declares that the correct figure would be 60 million. Since, however, he is quite as much interested in magnifying the number of Depressed Classes for political reasons as Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs are interested in increasing their own groups, 60 millions may safely be regarded as an exaggerated estimate. Probably the number lies somewhere between 50 and 60 millions, with the first figure being more nearly accurate.

It may be noted that there is wide variation in both the numbers of the Depressed Classes and their proportion to the Hindu population in the different provinces. One fact is striking: with the exception of Travancore, where the very high proportion of the Depressed Classes is not easily explained, the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the Hindu population is highest in Assam, Bengal, and the United Provinces, where their status in comparison to that of the Depressed Classes in the south of India is relatively high. One possible explanation for this is that where the social disabilities of the Depressed Classes are less acute their position is less sharply distinguished from that of other low castes, and in the classification of castes as depressed, many, not strictly untouchable, are included. This is especially likely to be the case, it seems, where the economic criterion enters into the classification, as in Assam. It is evident that if economic and social position are considered, many low castes, even though touchable, would be eligible for admission to the category of Depressed Classes. It is also possible that in provinces where the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the Hindu population is high, aboriginal tribes have been included. The difficulty of drawing a line between these two sections of Indian society has already been noted.

C. List of Principal Depressed Castes of India (showing name, number, locality in which considered depressed, and chief occupation). Compiled from the Census of India 1941. Vol. I.

<u>Name</u> (Alternative name in parenthesis)	<u>Localities in which treated as Depressed</u>	<u>Total number treated as Depressed</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Bagri (Bagdi, Badhik)	Ajmer-Merwara, Bengal, United Provinces, Gwalior, Rajputana.	1,023,127	Cultivators
Balai (Balahi)	Ajmer-Merwara, Central Provinces and Berar, United Provinces, Central India, Gwalior, Rajputana.	561,662	Weavers
Bauri (Bavari, Bawaria)	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Delhi, Madras, Punjab, United Provinces, Travancore	721,299	Cultivators
Bhambi (Bambhi)	Ajmer-Merwara, Bombay, Central India, Rajputana, Western India States Agency	183,917	Leather-workers
Bhangi (Lalbegi, Mehtar, Halai-khor)	Ajmer-Merwara, Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Bombay, Central Provinces and Berar, United Provinces, Baroda, Central India, Gwalior, Rajputana, Sikkim, Western India States Agency.	865,453	Sweepers and scavengers
Bhar	United Provinces	461,624	Field laborers
Bhuinmali	Bengal, Assam	111,439	Sweepers and scavengers
Bhuiya	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Sikkim, United Provinces	738,479	Cultivators
Bhumij	Bihar and Orissa	266,464	Cultivators
Chakkiliyan	Madras, Travancore	630,359	Leather-workers
Chamar (Chambhar, Khalpa, Samagara, Satnami)	Ajmer-Merwara, Baluchistan, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar, Coorg, Delhi, Madras, North West Frontier Province, Punjab, United Provinces,	11,751,187	Leather-workers

	Baroda, Central India Agency, Gwalior, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajputana, Western India States Agency		
Chuhra	Baluchistan, Delhi, North West Frontier Province, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir	484,596	Sweepers
Dhobi	Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar, United Provinces, Sikkim	1,406,291	Washermen
Dom (Domar, Dombo, Duma, Bhansphor, Basor, Dharwar, Patni, Wansfoda)	Ajmer-Merwara, Assam, Bengal, Baroda, Bihar and Orissa, Bombay, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, Punjab, United Provinces, Central India, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajputana, Gwalior	884,403	Basket-makers, drummers, scavengers, etc.
Dusadh	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, United Provinces	1,400,878	Cultivators and servants
Ganda	Central Provinces	108,843	Cotton-weavers
Ghasia	Baluchistan, Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras	132,382	Cultivators and field laborers
Hari	Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa	262,354	Scavengers and menials
Iravan	Travancore	869,863	Toddy-drawers
Jaliya Kai-bartta	Assam, Bengal	501,146	Fishermen and boatmen
Jhalo Malo	Assam, Bengal	208,925	Artisans
Kandra	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa	159,837	Fishermen and village servants
Kaora	Bengal	107,908	Sweepers and scavengers
Kapali	Bengal	165,583	Jute weavers
Khatik	Baluchistan, Bengal, Central Provinces and Berar, Delhi, United Provinces, Gwalior	241,493	Fruit and vegetable-sellers, butchers, field laborer
Koli and Dagl	Delhi, Punjab, Gwalior	263,751	Cultivators
(17401)			

Kori (Koria)	Baluchistan, Central Provinces and Berar, United Provinces, Raj- putana	964,661	Field laborers
Mahar (Cheruman, Dher, Holey, Ma, Holar, Mal, Meh- ra, Pulayan, Vankar)	Ajmer-Merwara, Assam, Bengal, Bombay, Coorg, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, United Pro- vinces, Baroda, Central India, Rajputana, Hydera- bad, Cochin, Travan- core, Western India States Agency	5,447,947	Servants and menials
Mang (Madiga, Matangi, Megh, Meghwal, Mad- gi)	Ajmer-Merwara, Bombay, Coorg, Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, Punjab, Baroda, Central India, Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Raj- putana, Western India States Agency	2,547,537	Servants and menials
Muchi (Mochi, Macchi)	Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Central Provinces and Berar, Coorg, Madras, United Pro- vinces, Sikkim	458,206	Leather-workers
Musahar	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, United Pro- vinces	801,535	Field laborers
Namasudra (Chandala)	Assam, Bengal, Madras	2,267,589	Cultivators
Pallen	Madras, Travancore	855,104	Field laborers
Pan (Panka, Pano, Panik)	Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Central Pro- vinces and Berar, Madras	688,456	Cultivators and field laborers
Paraiyan (Sambavam)	Coorg, Madras, Travancore, Cochin	1,200,135	Field laborers
Pasi	Ajmer-Merwara, Baluchistan, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, United Provinces Rajputana	1,651,478	Cultivators, field laborers, palm-tappers, toddy-drawers
Pod	Bengal	667,731	Cultivators
Raigar	Ajmer-Merwara Rajputana	152,704	Leather-worker
Silpkar (17401)	United Provinces	313,737	Artisans

III. PRESENT CONDITION OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

A. Economic Position

1. Disabilities. Despite some recent changes affecting the condition of the exterior castes, economically and socially the group remains underprivileged. Social segregation, in ancient times imposed upon outcastes because they were considered unclean, has already been noted. This persists today. Throughout India, part of the village, usually the most undesirable section, is set aside for the houses of the Depressed Classes. The Mahar quarters in Berar have been described as being "sordid and insanitary; very often they are near the village midden or the places where the carcasses of cattle are dumped." 9/ In a typical village of South India the caste community is contrasted with that of the outcastes:

"On the west side of the high road is the caste village, open, exposed to the sun. One house in it is imposing, with two stories, a flat roof, a covered approach, ornamental iron gate and pillars adorned with paintings. The two parallel streets...are maintained in a fit condition for cart traffic. The houses, some built of brick, some of earth, some tiled, some thatched, have the little pial, or veranda facing the street with niches in the walls for lights to burn at nightfall. Built round little courts which are open to the sky, they give seclusion to those who desire it... and the women habitually stay very much indoors..."

"To the east of the high road is the pariah village with its own architecture and its own temples. It has no streets, only paths worn smooth by the pressure of bare feet. It lies altogether in the shade, in a grove of palms mixed with trees of various kinds. Houses are made of a framework of sticks, the roofs thatched with palm leaves, and the walls also woven, as it were, of leaves and twigs. These dwellings are dark inside, but with sufficient openings to keep well-ventilated. The floor is bare earth. There is little privacy here. Men, women and children live in the open." 10/

Segregation of the Depressed Classes is likewise a feature of city life. Crowded and insanitary slums or hutting grounds for the Depressed Classes are typical of all large cities. In a Madras slum the huts, "which are generally made of mud and thatch or of old kerosene tins, are low hovels, without any aperture for light or air except a doorway so small that one has to stoop to enter. The average size is 8 feet by 9 feet, though many are smaller. In some cherries [slums] the huts are built back to back, or are separated only by the narrowest alleys, with the result that there is overcrowding of the very worst kind. In most cases the houses are so flimsy that they afford no effective shelter whether in the monsoon or in the hot weather." 11/

Generally speaking the Depressed Classes occupy the lowest economic levels of Indian society. Although a few have managed to acquire wealth, the vast majority are extremely poor. In the villages the functional castes, such as sweepers, washermen, leather-workers, weavers, etc., are for the most part entirely dependent upon the higher caste people for their subsistence. Occasionally they are given plots of land for their communal services; more often they are paid in kind. Both responsibilities and payments are regulated by custom, and under ideal conditions the depressed castes enjoy a large measure of security, even though this is at a bare subsistence level.

Some of the Depressed Classes are cultivators and self-supporting. These are especially numerous in eastern India where they are by no means desperately poor by comparison with the rest of the population. In northern India agricultural castes which are depressed can generally obtain only the poorest lands, and their economic position is precarious.

Large numbers of the Depressed Classes all over India are field laborers with no sort of proprietorship in the land. In the south they were until recently literally tied to the soil and certain low castes were bought and sold like cattle along with the land on which they worked. Although this sort of slavery has been abolished, these laborers are not much more independent than they were formerly; the relationship which exists between them and their employers can best be described as feudal.

An excellent indication of the standard of living of the Depressed Classes is afforded by information concerning rates of payment for services. In a village of Cochin State the population of 2000 includes about 300 outcastes who are "more or less serfs attached to the soil...the men plough, tend cattle, water the gardens, gather food etc., while the women pluck the paddy seedlings to replant them, and do work connected with the harvesting, separating the paddy from the stalks etc. They are employed as a rule throughout the year by their masters; in leisure days, however, they are paid a little less than the stated wage." ^{12/} Men are paid four pounds of paddy per day, women three pounds, and boys one pound. In addition men receive ten pounds, and women eight pounds on "certain festive days in the year." ^{12/} Once a year men are given a pair of clothes each 2 yards long, and women a pair three and a half yards long.

In the Punjab, agricultural laborers, who are usually sweepers and leatherworkers by caste, are paid in money or grain. In the District of Sheikhupura, such a servant earns 8 to 10 rupees per month plus two cotton shawls and shoes; in Shahpur, 20 maunds (1645 lbs.) of wheat per year, and in addition, two meals a day, clothes, shoes and tobacco; in Ferozepore, one-fifth of the produce of the fields cultivated and two meals a day. ^{13/}

Some statistics from Travancore are an index to the economic position of the Depressed Classes relative to that of the rest of the population. These are based on a random sample of 55,803 earners from the various communities.

Table II

(Compiled from Census of India 1931, Vol. Travancore, pt. I, pp.

Number of persons of each community in the random sample owning wet land.

Extent of wet land owned	All com- munities	Brahman	Navar	Ilava	Depressed Hindu	Other Hindus	Syrian Christian	Other Christians	Muslim
Below 20 cents	1,547	2	648	212	41	275	164	137	68
20-40 "	2,248	3	949	327	45	321	313	168	122
40-60 "	1,818	6	791	248	34	218	319	89	113
60-80 "	1,105	3	495	138	15	132	189	63	70
80-100 "	538	2	266	62	9	44	105	17	33
Total below 1 acre	7,256	16	3,149	987	144	990	1,090	474	406
1-2 acres	2,096	18	945	227	28	169	503	81	125
2-3 "	830	13	387	74	9	64	203	33	47
3-4 "	412	10	194	36	1	21	105	24	21
4-5 "	263	8	113	17	1	18	72	15	19
5-6 "	147	4	65	10	1	16	43	3	5
6-7 "	83	5	33	1	..	5	30	5	4
7-8 "	100	7	38	6	1	6	28	6	8
8-9 "	67	1	26	7	..	4	22	1	6
9-10 "	33	1	13	2	..	5	10	1	1
Total below 10 acres	11,287	83	4,963	1,367	185	1,298	2,106	643	642
10-100 acres	296	39	113	10	1	23	89	4	17
100 acres and above	10	3	1	..	..	5	1	..	..
TOTAL OWNERS	11,593	125	5,077	1,377	186	1,326	2,196	647	659
TOTAL EARNERS	55,803	296	9,910	10,413	6,219	9,864	8,363	7,501	3,237

Note: In this table and other similar tables values corresponding to the upper limit of each group are included in the next higher group.

Table II

Number of persons of each community in the random sample owning dry land.

Extent of dry land owned	All communities	Brahman	Nayar	Ilava	Depressed Hindu	Other Hindus	Syrian Christians	Other Christians	Muslim
Below 20 cents	2,382	9	498	433	132	561	279	308	162
20-40 "	3,274	6	774	661	168	687	426	361	191
40-60 "	3,602	15	944	630	215	714	501	350	233
60-80 "	2,343	6	643	419	127	420	366	200	162
80-100 "	1,049	5	313	234	44	118	213	71	51
Total below 1 acre	12,650	41	3,172	2,377	686	2,500	1,785	1,290	799
1-2 acres	6,773	34	1,864	1,153	359	1,073	1,304	546	440
2-3 "	3,330	17	951	488	130	456	801	319	168
3-4 "	1,778	13	518	225	53	238	473	161	97
4-5 "	1,150	10	353	155	28	130	313	85	76
5-6 "	775	9	244	102	12	84	215	62	47
6-7 "	435	8	130	52	3	38	137	46	21
7-8 "	284	..	74	27	9	24	110	27	13
8-9 "	280	4	84	34	7	28	93	17	13
9-10 "	115	3	40	10	..	14	36	8	4
Total below 10 Acres	27,570	139	7,430	4,623	1,287	4,585	5,267	2,561	1,678
10-100 acres	1,065	31	327	101	8	92	372	80	54
100 acres and above	38	7	10	2	..	5	13	1	..
TOTAL OWNERS	28,673	177	7,767	4,726	1,295	4,682	5,652	2,642	1,732
TOTAL EARNERS	55,803	296	9,910	10,413	6,219	9,864	8,363	7,501	3,237

Table II

Number of persons in each community owning houses.

Value of Houses	All com- munities	Brahman	Nayar	Ilava	Depressed Hindu	Other Hindus	Syrian Christian	Other Christians	Muslim
Rs.									
Below 100	22,645	16	9,289	4,493	2,364	4,534	3,185	3,462	1,302
100-200	4,371	14	1,179	747	81	715	959	372	304
200-300	2,115	13	606	311	32	254	580	193	126
300-400	1,331	13	408	172	12	166	388	86	86
400-500	555	9	167	79	8	57	170	38	27
500-600	917	12	269	108	8	109	276	74	41
600-700	192	3	65	13	1	16	75	9	10
700-800	348	3	120	35	4	27	107	33	19
800-900	154	7	58	14	1	10	45	13	6
900-1,000	53	1	13	4	..	6	21	3	5
1,000-3,000	1,100	53	367	100	6	73	380	58	63
3,000-5,000	147	14	36	2	..	16	63	10	6
5,000 and above	112	18	23	8	..	13	35	7	8
TOTAL OWNERS	34,040	176	6,620	6,086	2,517	5,996	6,284	4,358	2,003
TOTAL EARNERS	55,803	296	9,910	10,413	6,219	9,864	8,363	7,501	3,237

Table II

Number of persons in each community owning movable properties according to the random sample.

Value	All com- munities	Brahman	Nayar	Ilava	Depressed Hindu	Other Hindus	Syrian Christian	Other Christians	Muslim
Rs.									
Below 100	23,628	46	4,878	4,571	1,238	4,461	4,440	2,681	1,313
100--200	3,007	35	868	390	36	440	689	333	216
200--300	1,015	38	260	141	4	110	281	96	85
300--400	476	23	158	40	7	50	123	41	34
400--500	121	7	30	12	2	13	37	9	11
500--600	294	21	68	37	3	39	76	29	21
600--700	59	5	20	5	..	5	13	6	5
700--800	62	5	15	3	..	12	15	8	4
800--900	36	4	8	1	..	5	13	2	3
900--1,000	10	..	2	..	..	..	8	..	..
1,000--3,000	230	20	49	31	3	20	74	20	13
3,000--5,000	17	2	4	1	..	2	6	2	..
5,000 and above	21	6	2	..	..	5	7	..	1
TOTAL OWNERS	28,976	212	6,362	5,232	1,293	5,162	5,782	3,227	1,706
TOTAL EARNERS	55,803	296	9,910	10,413	6,219	9,864	8,363	7,501	3,237

2. Tendencies toward Economic Improvement. Formerly all individuals, including those from the Depressed Classes as well as other Hindus, were more strictly limited to the hereditary occupation of their caste than is the case today. The depressed castes more than any other benefit from abandoning their hereditary calling, since in many cases, they are depressed on account of the unclean nature of their occupations. In the Punjab, for example, "The sweeper who gives up his occupation, the leather-worker who abandons the use of undressed hides and works in tanned leather, or abandons the use of leather altogether and seeks another occupation, thereby quite definitely raises himself in the social scale." 14/ This tendency is so marked in the United Provinces that it has been stated that "it is quite common to regard as untouchable only those of the untouchable castes who still follow the unclean traditional occupations of those castes, while the others are not so regarded. Recognizing this fact those members of an untouchable caste who have left the traditional occupation and are now engaged in a more respectable mode of livelihood will often form a separate branch of the caste, usually under a new caste name, and endeavour to dissociate themselves with the old parent caste...This tendency is responsible for reports from several districts that the average Brahman now treats as an untouchable only those actually employed in scavenging and handling dead animals, or who eat flesh." 15/

Attempts to break away from the traditional and degrading occupation occasionally take an uneconomic form. "Many Madigas, [a caste of leather-workers in Madras] feeling that their connection with tanning and leather-work is the cause of their degradation will resist all efforts to interest them in the production of the higher quality and more lucrative leather goods and engage in very subordinate work at meager pay away from contact with their traditional occupation." 16/

Table III compiled from the 1931 Census Reports, indicates the extent to which the Depressed Classes are engaged in occupations other than those traditionally associated with their castes.

As might be expected, the breakdown of the connection between caste and hereditary occupation is more marked in the cities than in rural areas. The growth of industry has created new fields of enterprise for all castes, and concurrently the increase in population and the consequent pressure on the land has necessitated a change in occupation. Self-contained cooperative village units fail to function efficiently when the number of members of the component castes increases beyond a certain point. Many individuals from the depressed castes have from choice or necessity migrated to the cities in search of a livelihood. It is estimated that 20 percent of the industrial workers in the city of Bombay are members of the Depressed Classes. 17/

It is not to be supposed however that untouchability, segregation, and other discriminatory practices have altogether disappeared in the cities. Urban living conditions among the Depressed Classes have already been noted. Although the evidence is not conclusive, it appears that segregation of the untouchables is a feature in certain factories. Speaking of conditions in Bombay cotton mills, Dr. Ambedkar claimed that the Depressed Class men were entirely kept out of certain departments, and that this discrimination was based on untouchability. 18/ On the other hand, in the spinning mills of Akola (Berar) Depressed Class men work in all departments along with other castes, but it has been charged that they are given less work to prevent them from getting as much pay as the other workers. 19/

It is probably on the whole correct to say that urban industrial life offers to the Depressed Classes opportunities more nearly equal to those of the higher castes than does the old village life where a sweeper, for example, unless he was able to acquire land, had no expectation of exchanging his ill-paid occupation for a more remunerative one.

In the hope of bettering their economic status and escaping oppressive caste restrictions many from the Depressed Classes have emigrated to other parts of India or to foreign countries. As far as India itself is concerned, most migrants go to Assam where they obtain work on the tea plantations. This may be of either a temporary or a permanent nature. Some remarks on the subject made by a local recruiting agent for the Tea Districts Labour Association in Madras, though perhaps optimistic, indicate some of the reasons for emigration and the benefits derived.

"Migration to Assam therefore offers to the emigrant facilities which he finds impossible to obtain in his own home. Work is obtainable all year round on gardens and every opportunity is given the labourer to better his economic and social status. Travel broadens outlook and this is as true with the lower classes as with his more fortunate brethren. The once timid and down-trodden Sowra or Madiga, after a spell on a tea garden, returns, not only physically improved but also in his bearing and social status, and inclined even to be domineering and to demand a say in all matters governing his social welfare.

"Away from the influences of his caste superiors, the untouchable reaches a higher standard both of living and personal freedom, so much so that the higher castes are for this reason very much against his migrating at all and particularly to Assam where these tendencies are more easily acquired." 20/

Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, Fiji, the West Indies and South Africa all attract large numbers of the Depressed Classes. While some remain abroad many of them return to India, where, with what they have managed to save, they buy land and cattle. One of the Depressed Classes Associations in Madras, in a memorandum to the Indian Statutory Commission in 1928, strongly condemned the policy of the government in restricting emigration, on the grounds that the Depressed Classes derived immense benefit from their opportunities in foreign lands. 21/

3. Government Efforts for Economic Amelioration. Within the last 25 or 30 years the Provincial and State Governments have taken steps to improve the economic condition of the Depressed Classes. One of the most important of these measures is the provision of land for house sites or cultivation. By the end of the year 1934-35, in Madras alone, 35,169 house sites on government-owned waste land had been assigned to the depressed castes. Such sites are free of cost, the recipient being required to build a house within a stated period, and rent is charged only after a certain number of years, usually seven. Another 35,540 sites on private land acquired for this purpose by the Government were assigned during the same period, the cost to the Depressed Classes being spread over a number of years. 22/ By 1937-38, 417,794.84 acres were assigned to these castes for cultivation. 23/

Travancore and Cochin States have likewise assigned lands for cultivation to these classes. Cochin had, by 1931, established 41 colonies with 1,640 families settled in them, where the untouchables were given house sites, land and the necessary implements for cultivation. "The ownership of land creates a new and permanent interest in their minds, and provides a powerful incentive for honest work, which is absent in the case of those who live on lands from which they may be evicted at the will of the owners whereby they will be deprived of the fruits of their labors." 24/

Other ameliorative measures consist of the construction and repair of wells for the use of the Depressed Classes. Madras in 1937-38 spent over one lakh of rupees (\$30,000) in this type of work, and Rs.6,472-11-0 (\$1,942) on sanitary improvements in the slums of Madras City. 25/ Generally speaking, probably because the need has not been so great, other provinces have been more backward in this respect.

Table III
Compiled from the 1931 Census of India Reports.

Province	Caste	Traditional Occupation	Population (Male and Female)	Population Working Primarily at Traditional Occupations	Cultivators, Owners, Tenants	Workers in Industries	Population Occupied in Trade	Public Works	Public Administration	Professions and Liberal Arts
Bihar	Bengal	Servants	84,790	30,495	5,496	3,408	32	336	778	342
	Chandur	Domestic	281,431	44,139	31,071	11,777	1,777	97	35	133
	Mag	Village Service	1,264,308	188,020	287,585	35,417	4,138	498	4,043	2,277
Bihar	Mag	Village Service	309,538	52,982	90,606	9,047	1,504	166	1,281	607
	Chandur	Domestic	150,448	15,469	2,699	25,646	1,510	17	169	977
	Mag	Domestic	140,062	17,694	4,718	3,355	620	640	395	378
United Provinces	Bengal	Servants	132,593	4,256	5,712	3,076	1,179	146	355	2,064
	Chandur	Domestic	229,608	36,450	11,111	4,136	2,400	268	297	466
	Mag	Village Service	503,608	179,301	13,290	6,396	2,548	1,924	283	6,897
United Provinces	Chandur	Domestic	6,312,193	1,118,195	1,118,195	66,373	46,097	1,592	719	2,152
	Mag	Village Service	778,139	228,178	136,802	2,102	1,076	160	50	620
	Mag	Domestic	9,209	2,411	454	205	186	20	4	25
Punjab	Chandur	Servants	941,312	76,378	58,281	34,078	3,092	213	944	1,139
	Chandur	Domestic	458,772	115,966	9,094	2,918	860	310	1,208	621
	Mag	Village Service	1,01,390	95,625	2,958	2,958	216	64	140	54
Punjab and Sindh	Chandur	Servants	1,264,907	58,978	198,105	1,469	972	70	110	3,751
	Chandur	Domestic	411,111	84,011	65,621	675	577	49	56	267
	Mag	Village Service	21,790	10,419	159	110	160	200	88	622
Central Provinces and Berar	Chandur	Servants	615,467	125,094	76,774	4,000	2,977	145	135	1,000
	Chandur	Domestic	173,783	15,111	20,313	278	765	1,899	132	2,349
	Mag	Village Service	19,202	9,482	98	116	52	1	139	136
Gujarat	Chandur	Servants	13,162	3,716	89	1,205	428	22	13	22
	Chandur	Domestic	61,043	39,362	398	2,181	102	200	11	30
	Mag	Village Service	23,380	4,711	197	594	397	11	9	11
Madras	Chandur	Servants	669,860	108,601	68,110	53,244	18,241	11	707	4,233
	Chandur	Domestic	13,413	4,090	176	20	20	11	3	14
	Mag	Village Service	30,603	5,727	995	127	73	11	60	179
Madras	Chandur	Servants	1,076,539	195,047	34,010	2,205	3,551	609	743	1,693
	Chandur	Domestic	1,282,092	215,071	39,963	-	5,296	217	348	1,116
	Mag	Village Service	12,822	7,876	2,760	-	68	11	28	36
Madras	Chandur	Servants	7,801	1,698	35	302	1	11	6	111
	Chandur	Domestic	31,018	5,849	878	460	23	136	11	66
	Mag	Village Service	9,443	2,381	703	150	64	11	15	6
Madras	Chandur	Servants	11,149	1,160	6,786	111	76	23	79	1
	Chandur	Domestic	1,607	85	280	17	5	3	4	10
	Mag	Village Service	21,329	2,109	5,668	777	317	100	259	71

Note: The figures of those working at various occupations do not equal the figures given for the total population of workers, as the table is based on selections from the reports and only the most important findings are given here.

Notes: For Madras, the figures for those following occupations other than traditional ones include only earnings; figures under working population include earnings and working dependents. In the case of Madras, the figures for those following occupations other than traditional ones include only earnings and working dependents. For all provinces the figures given for those working at traditional occupations include earnings and working dependents.

In the column for cultivators, owners and tenants, the figures for Madras include field laborers; those for other provinces do not.

The Punjab Census Report lists separately under each caste the numbers of the various religious groups. For this table, only Hindu and Mohammedan have been included.

Until recent times Government employment was almost entirely out of reach of the Depressed Classes. Caste Hindus objected to being forced to associate with the untouchables in government offices and it was thought inadvisable to appoint Depressed Class men to such posts.

Even today 26/ there is only one member of the Depressed Classes in the Indian Civil Service, and he is a nominated member. Ambedkar estimates that there are not more than 25 in the Provincial Civil Service; most of these are engaged in the work of Revenue Collection. Neither the Judicial Service nor any other branch of the Civil Service has any Depressed Class members.

With regard to the Police Service, Ambedkar writes: "There is the greatest objection to the employment of the Depressed Classes in the Police Service. The police have to arrest and to search and it was long felt that a service such as the police, which confer power of arresting and searching the Hindus and their houses, would never be given to the Depressed Classes without causing a revolt against the British Government by the Hindus. The British Government therefore adopted the safest remedy namely to close the door of police service to the Depressed Classes and it has remained closed to them ever since." 26a/

Some Provincial Governments, however, have recently taken steps to remedy this state of affairs. In Madras, for example, members of the Scheduled Castes are given concessions in employment in Government Service. Approximately one out of twelve appointments are reserved for these castes, the age limit has been raised to 27 years, and the general educational standard has been lowered for the Depressed Classes. 27/

The Depressed Classes were recruited for the army until 1892, after which they were debarred from entering the service. Probably the difficulties involved in housing and messing with the caste Hindus led the Government to take this step. During the last war one battalion was raised but it was disbanded at the end of the war. Recently Wavell requested Ambedkar's assistance in recruiting 3 battalions from the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar made his assistance provisional upon two conditions, (1) that the battalions would not be disbanded at the end of the war, (2) that no caste Hindus would be officers in the battalions. General Wavell agreed to these conditions and two battalions have been formed, with a third under way. 27a/

B. Social Position.

1. Social Disabilities. The theory of pollution is responsible for most of the disabilities which characterize the social position of the Depressed Classes. Just as it led to the practice of confining the untouchables to a certain section of the village, the fear of pollution has resulted in segregation in various other phases of life. The rules restricting social intercourse were always far more stringent in the south of India than in the north, and today, though reforms have been effected which have considerably improved the condition of these low castes all over India, the south still affords numerous and striking examples of social segregation.

Until recent times the Depressed Classes in the south of India were forbidden the use of highways, public conveyances, market places, hospitals, and law courts. Many of these restrictions have practically disappeared except, perhaps in remote rural areas. Not long ago a member of an untouchable caste travelling along the road, had to shout a warning of the risk of pollution and to take to the fields in order to allow the caste Hindu to pass by. Such a custom is probably a thing of the past and even in Travancore it is reported that the Depressed Classes no longer leave the road on the approach of a caste Hindu. To be sure the untouchables may not be able, for example, to take funeral or marriage processions along roads where Brahmans or other high caste individuals live, but this is not regarded as much of a hardship by the Depressed Classes themselves.

As late as 1919 a Madras Government order mentions a petition calling attention to the difficulties experienced by untouchable castes in regard to the use of river and canal ferries. A member of such a caste might have to wait for hours, as he could not travel in company with a Brahman, who, of course had priority. ^{28/} Generally speaking, however, modern conditions of travel have made it impossible for the high caste Hindus to avoid contact with the untouchables. Third class railway travel in India does not afford much privacy to anyone and the caste Hindus find it more convenient not to inquire into the caste of their fellow-travellers.

The case is similar with respect to law courts. Formerly the Depressed Classes were not permitted to enter courts. As late as 1924 in rural areas in South India neither parties nor witnesses belonging to the untouchable castes were allowed to enter the precincts of the court. Intermediaries took down their statements and conveyed them to the court. Discrimination of this sort is, however, rare today.

The refusal to permit the untouchables to use village wells, not by any means confined to the south of India, has already been noted. On the whole it may be said that in northern and eastern India such restrictions are tending to disappear, or are so modified as to cause comparatively little inconvenience to the Depressed Classes. But a committee appointed to inquire into the condition of the Depressed Classes in Bombay Presidency in 1930 reported that they had not been able to find a single instance where the Depressed Classes were using continuously the same public well as the higher classes. ^{29/} In South India also, probably very little improvement has been made in this respect. Taboos on accepting food and drink from the untouchables have by no means become inoperative and the fact that a Brahman is usually employed to supply drinking water to train passengers indicates the force of this prohibition.

Probably, from the point of view of the general progress of the Depressed Classes, the most serious result of the fear of pollution and of untouchability is that in many areas the untouchable children are debarred from the schools, or so segregated that the acquisition of knowledge is all but impossible. This sort of segregation is not and probably never has been very marked in northern and eastern India. The Indian Statutory Commission stated ^{30/} that 75 percent of the Depressed Class pupils in the United Provinces attended schools along with children of the higher castes. ^{31/} Even in 1928 the Depressed Class children in Bengal were admitted without difficulty to all primary schools. ^{32/} In central and southern India, until very recently this was not the case. In these sections even today the Depressed Class children are sometimes victims of this type of discrimination. An extreme, but probably not isolated case, was observed in 1930 by the committee appointed to enquire into the condition of the Depressed Classes in Bombay Presidency. An untouchable boy was made to sit on a platform exposed to the elements, outside the school; from time to time the teacher leaned out of the window to give instruction to him. On rainy days he had to go home. ^{33/} In 1928 it was claimed that in 95 percent of the schools in Baroda the Depressed Class children were made to sit outside. ^{34/} When the Indian Statutory Commission made their investigation, there were in Madras only 16,000 Depressed Class pupils out of 228,000, studying in ordinary schools. ^{35/}

In India as a whole, in 1931 out of 1000 members of the Depressed Classes 19 were literate. In the Indian States considered separately, the figure was 31 per thousand, in the Provinces, 16 per thousand. Of the Provinces, Baluchistan and Bengal had the highest percentage of literacy among these classes with 69 and 50 per thousand respectively. The Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, and the United Provinces had the lowest, the figures being 8, 6 and 5 per thousand. Taking the Hindus as a whole, out of 1000 aged 20 and over, 96 were literate. ^{35a/}

The following table indicates the state of education among the Depressed Classes in 1931, compared with that of the total population. ^{36/}

Province	No. of Depressed Class Pupils	No. per thousand of Depressed Classes at School	No. per thousand of total population at school
Bengal	433,687	54	63
Bihar and Orissa	24,187	4	32
Bombay	62,903	36	67
Central Provinces	43,008	15	33
Madras	352,162	48	72
Punjab	36,279	30	63
United Provinces	125,383	11	35

A good many of the Depressed Class pupils are no doubt primary school children. In 1935-36 out of 75,792 pupils belonging to this group in Bombay schools, 73,238 were in primary schools; there were only 58 in colleges. 37/

Material inconveniences and disadvantages resulting from the attitude of the caste Hindus towards these Depressed Classes have been noted. More difficult to estimate is the effect of untouchability on their character and personality. It has been said that "Abject dependence, lack of ambition and initiative, carelessness, deceitfulness, extravagance, drunkenness, insolence and harshness in dealing with others are character weaknesses which many observers have found to be especially common among untouchables; they probably all enter into the common understanding of depressed-class mentality. Their exceptional prevalence may, we think, be traced to distorted reactions to oppression." 38/ The lack of independence of thought and action has been stressed by leaders of the Depressed Classes. A memorandum presented to the Indian Statutory Commission contains the following statement: "The high caste land-owning Hindus having crushed the Depressed Classes down to servitude and extreme poverty, made the minds of generations of the Depressed Classes to think and act according to the dictates of their employers and to take their orders as the law of the country. When the minds of the Depressed Classes have been brought to such a state, it is believed, and it is true, that they are incapable of exercising their independence, free thought and even conscience and discretion against the will, wish and pleasure of their caste employers..." 39/ Of more value than such general statements is a concrete instance given in The Hindu of December 24, 1932. In the Tinnevely District of Madras is a caste of untouchables who wash the clothes of other untouchables. The very sight of them is considered polluting and for this reason they are forced to lead a nocturnal life, working between midnight and daybreak. The interviewer records that he had the greatest difficulty in persuading these people to come out of their houses during the daytime and when they finally did so, their bodies were shaking and trembling with fear. 40/ This is of course a very extreme case, and indeed most statements referring to the "servile mentality" of the Depressed Classes are concerned with conditions in Madras or other areas of South India. It is very likely that they are not applicable in the same degree to northern and eastern India.

2. Government Ameliorative Measures. Most of the measures taken by Government on behalf of the Depressed Classes have been designed to remove social disabilities. Where necessary practically all the Provincial and most of the Indian (native) State Governments have passed

laws declaring roads, wells, courts and schools open to these castes. All such laws, however, have to contend with popular prejudice and even where provision has been made for penalties in case of breaches of the rule, these laws have not always proved effective. It is one thing to declare a well open to use by the Depressed Classes, another to force the caste Hindus to permit this use. In Baroda, for example, a State well known for the enlightened policy of its ruler in regard to the Depressed Classes, an artesian well was sunk in 1931 with labor supplied by the depressed castes on condition that they be allowed to draw water from it. On its completion the caste Hindus refused to give them access to it, but eventually it was agreed that the untouchables should lay a 500-foot pipe with a tap at one end which would be for their own use. This was done, but the castes living at the end of the pipe objected and the unfortunate untouchables had to give up the idea of using the well at all. ^{41/} The fault does not lie entirely with the caste Hindus in such matters. Very often the depressed castes are too timid to assert themselves and take advantage of the privileges given them by law.

The improvement over the old conditions in regard to the use of roads and public conveyances has already been noted. Generally speaking, however, this has come about as a result less of Government intervention than of modern methods of transportation which do not permit strict observance of caste regulations.

Government policy in regard to education of the Depressed Classes has been gradually to abolish separate schools for the untouchable children. In areas where segregation of this sort is a serious problem, the Provincial Governments have refused funds to publicly-managed schools which exclude Depressed Class children and have taken steps to have public schools removed from temples and other places where untouchable children would not be permitted to enter. Although the process of amalgamation has been hindered by the attitude of the caste Hindus, nevertheless, considerable progress has been made. The Province of Bombay will serve as an example: in 1935-36 there were only 431 special primary schools for Depressed Class children with 16,589 pupils as against a total of 73,238 untouchable pupils in all primary schools. ^{42/}

Since among the chief obstacles to educational advance are the poverty and lack of interest of the Depressed Classes themselves, practically all Provincial and State Governments have provided special facilities to encourage pupils from this group. These include scholarships, remission of fees, funds for school supplies and maintenance of special hostels to accommodate the students. In Madras during the year 1937-38 Rs.7.05 lakhs (\$210,000) were spent in education of the Depressed Classes; 62 residential and 3,159 non-residential scholarships were given for ordinary education, and 32 non-residential scholarships to arts colleges. ^{43/} Public elementary school pupils paid no fees and those in secondary schools and colleges were able to obtain half-fee remissions on the production of poverty certificates. In some schools books and slates were provided free of cost and Depressed Class pupils were exempt from paying the fee for the secondary school-leaving certificate examination. ^{44/} Recently the Central Government has announced that it will set aside the sum of Rs.3 lakhs (\$90,000) per year to provide educational facilities for the Depressed Classes. One-third of this will be devoted to scholarships for untouchable children, and the remaining 2 lakhs (\$60,000) will be utilized in providing Depressed Class students with funds for advanced study abroad. This sum compares very favorably with the 3 lakhs per year given by the Central Government to the Muslim University of Aligarh and the same amount given to the Hindu University of Benares. ^{45/}

3. Social Climbing. Efforts of the Depressed Classes themselves to improve their position have been directed largely towards effecting a rise in social status. Although it might be expected that their treatment at the hands of caste Hindus would have led to solidarity within the ranks

of the Depressed Classes, such has not been the case. Since every caste, however lowly, looks with scorn and contempt upon some other caste there has been no concerted attempt to break down the barriers between caste and outcaste. With few exceptions each caste has been interested in its own advancement and indifferent or even hostile to the efforts of other castes. Attempts to rise in the social hierarchy have taken such forms as changing the caste name, giving up unclean occupations, and discontinuing the use of such foods and drinks as are forbidden to orthodox Hindus.

What may be termed the Adi-movement does, however, cut across caste lines. Adi means early, first, or aboriginal and a good many castes of South India, especially in Madras, have given up their ancient names and adopted instead the name of Adi-Dravida, or Adi-Andhra, or Adi-Karnataka, depending upon their location, indicating in this way that they are descendants of the original, pre-Hindu inhabitants of the country. By this means some of the Depressed Classes assert their independence from Hinduism in both its religious and its social sense. The religious aspect of the movement will be discussed later. From the information available it seems that the idea owes its origin to the Government of Madras, who adopted Adi-Dravida and Adi-Andhra as official names for the Depressed Classes about 1922. On the whole it has not been as popular as might have been expected. In the 1931 Census relatively few castes returned these designations in place of their caste names.

Madras	<u>Adi-Dravida</u>	1,619,227
Travancore	" "	966
Coorg	" "	52
Madras	<u>Adi-Andhra</u>	73,313
Madras	<u>Adi-Karnataka</u>	664

The Government of Mysore has adopted the term Adi-Karnataka for all the Depressed castes; the Government of Hyderabad used the term Adi-Hindu. Several Depressed Class associations have taken names of this sort. There are the Adi-Hindu Social Service League, and the Adi-Dravida Educational League, both of Hyderabad, the Adi-Hindu Sabha of Delhi, the All India Adi-Dravida Maha Jana Sabha of Madras, etc.

The practice according to which individual castes lay claim to new names indicative of a higher social status is more developed in the north of India than in the south. Generally the desire is to be recognized as Rajputs, Kshatriyas or Brahmans. Probably the most amusing example of this is given in the Bihar and Orissa Census Report of 1931 in which mention is made of the Pasis "whose unrivalled proficiency in tree climbing is said to have encouraged them to claim a title meaning 'the Brahmans who go up in the air.'" 46/ In most cases these claims are backed up with mythical or pseudo-historical evidence showing derivation from one of the three higher castes. The Bengal Census Superintendent in 1931 had to deal with demands for a change of name on the part of 44 castes, and there were 54 such cases in the United Provinces; most of these were depressed castes. In addition to selecting a new name, members of low castes which are endeavoring to climb in the social scale, adopt the sacred thread, properly worn by only the three upper castes, give up if possible their unclean occupations, and abstain from eating meat and liquor.

As long as the Depressed Classes were content to remain in a subservient position, faithfully performing their duties and making no attempts to rise to equality with their superiors, there was little friction between them and the caste Hindus. Indeed, they played a very essential role in village life, and as one author has remarked, "they were by no means weaponless against aggression. For example if a Jat's cow dies in his owner's sitting room or veranda, only an untouchable can remove the corpse. The urgency of this operation, especially when the thermometer stands at 118 F. in the shade, encourages the cultivators to remain on friendly terms with their social inferiors." 47/

The patronage of the government and the general temper of the times have tended to foster a spirit of rebellion among the Depressed Classes. Attempts to assert their rights and manifestations of independence on the part of the untouchables have in many cases led to trouble with the caste Hindus. When in 1931 the Government of Baroda abolished separate schools for the Depressed Classes the caste Hindus in some areas expressed their resentment against the untouchables by burning their crops or pouring kerosene into their wells. 48/ The use of untouchable castes of wells, even though these have been declared open to public use, has likewise met with violence on the part of the caste Hindus. In Orissa, when a low caste of palanquin-bearers wished to abandon their traditional means of livelihood, the caste Hindus violently expressed their disapproval of a course which would result in considerable inconvenience to themselves. The refusal of some Mahars of the Central Provinces to remove and skin dead cattle--their hereditary duty--led to assault and rioting. It is ironic though understandable that the caste Hindus discourage the Depressed Classes from giving up their unclean occupations--ironic because the Hindus regard these classes as unclean on account of their occupations--understandable because these very occupations are necessary to village economy.

C. Religion

1. Religious Disabilities. The Depressed Classes are by definition Hindus; non-Hindu groups on the same social and economic plane are not classified as depressed. Until very recent times, however, in the eyes of orthodox caste Hindus the untouchable castes remained outside the pale of Hinduism in spite of the fact that generally speaking they worshipped gods of the Hindu pantheon and observed Hindu ritual. Caste Hindus, fearing pollution for themselves and their deities, kept the Depressed Classes at a safe distance in religious as well as in social life. This attitude has altered somewhat, and today the Hindus are more than anxious to include the untouchables in their ranks. However, most of the restrictions imposed upon the Depressed Classes still persist, even though they have been relaxed to a certain extent in some areas.

Chief among the religious disabilities from which the untouchables suffer is the prohibition against temple entry. As we have seen, Hindus of the south are far more severe in this respect than those of the north of India. In Bengal there are very few castes which are kept entirely outside the temple precincts; and even Chamars and sweepers of the United Provinces are allowed to enter certain temples provided they are wearing a wet cloth as evidence, presumably, that they have recently bathed. In South India the number of castes excluded is greater, and the rules against temple entry are more seldom relaxed. Usually at such temples provision is made for the untouchables to worship by placing a box for their offerings outside the temple precincts. In the villages the depressed castes usually have their own shrines or temples in the section of the village where they live or in a nearby grove of trees. Hindus of all classes pay a considerable amount of attention to local deities and in the worship of these the Depressed Classes frequently play an important part. It is only from the orthodox temples in which the principal gods of Hinduism are worshipped that the untouchables are excluded.

Untouchable castes are not, of course, served by Brahmans. For the numerous ceremonies at which, among the higher castes, Brahman officiates, the Depressed Classes have their own priests.

Recently many temples have been declared open to the untouchables. This is a consequence largely of agitation on the part of the Depressed Classes and some caste Hindus; the influence of Gandhi has also been an important factor. Madras and Bombay in British India, Travancore and some other native states have passed laws opening temples or removing hindrances to such a step in the future. Much, of course, remains

to be done. The Depressed Classes are far from satisfied with the progress made. In their reactions two opposing trends may be observed. The majority, perhaps, have increased their efforts to achieve an equal footing with the higher castes within the Hindu fold. Many others, however, have renounced the Hindu faith. Some of these declare that they form a group entirely separate from the Hindus; others have become converts to Islam, Sikhism, or Christianity.

2. The Adi-Movement. The movement to have the Depressed Classes recognized as a social and religious group distinct from the other elements of Indian society is comparatively recent. Principally it takes the form of adopting a new name compounded with the term Ad or Adi, as indication that the castes so designated regard themselves as pre-Hindu. The social aspect of this movement has been mentioned above. When the Punjab Census was taken in 1931, there were 399,309 members of the Depressed Classes who returned Ad-Dharm as their religion. These were mostly drawn from the Chuhra and Chamar castes. The Adi-Hindu Sabha of Delhi persuaded the Government of Hyderabad to list all Depressed Classes as Adi-Hindu by religion. The fact is that there is considerable evidence to support the view that a large number of the Depressed Classes are descendants of the aboriginal population of the country. However, comparatively few of the untouchables have been attracted by this movement. And at least one group which has adopted the name of Adi-Hindu does not wish to be completely divorced from Hinduism. When the Adi-Dravida Educational League of Hyderabad claimed that the Depressed Classes as a Community were entirely separate from the followers of Vedic religion, one section of Adi-Hindus maintained that they were Hindus because "the conception of God, the mode of worship, the system of rituals and code of customs, the manner of dress and way of life, of the socially Depressed Classes are identical with those of the caste Hindus." 48a/

3. Conversion. Most of the Depressed Classes who are dissatisfied with their status in Hinduism become converts to other religions. The three chief non-Hindu religions of India, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity, have from very early times attracted converts from the Depressed Classes. This is largely due to the fact that in theory none of these three religions recognizes a caste division of society.

Of the 92,058,096 Muslims in India today, probably the majority has been drawn from the lower castes. Our knowledge regarding the type of converts in the early history of Islam in India is largely a matter of inference, but it seems fairly certain that from the first the lower castes made an important contribution to the Muslim population. Certainly since the middle of the 19th Century many of the converts to Islam have been originally members of the Depressed Classes. Some 40,000 Cherumans in Malabar became Muslims in the ten years between 1871 and 1881. In the first decade of the 20th Century 40,000 converts, mostly belonging to the Chuhra and Chamar castes, embraced Islam in the Punjab alone. 49/ The figures for Madras are startling: in the decade from 1921-1931 there were approximately 170,000 converts to Islam, most of whom were drawn from the Depressed Classes; this is two and a half percent of the total population of the Depressed Classes of Madras in 1921. 50/

It is only in the north of India that converts to Sikhism have been at all numerous. Many of the Depressed Classes of the Punjab have become Sikhs. In that Province, from 1921 to 1931 the number of Sikhs increased above expectation by 542,576 and a large number of these people are no doubt from the Depressed Classes. 51/ Figures for a few castes show a great increase in the number of Sikhs since 1921. For example, in 1921 only 42,476 Chuhras returned Sikhism as their religion; in 1931, there were 169,247 listed as belonging to this caste. 51-a/

Christianity from the days of the first missionaries, has attracted large numbers of untouchables. The program of social and

economic uplift adopted by the missionaries was largely responsible. In 1931 there were roughly 6 million Indian Christians exclusive of Europeans and those from the tribal areas. There is no doubt that the majority of these have been drawn from the Depressed Classes. As might be expected the Christians are most numerous in the south of India, where the disabilities of the untouchables are more pronounced than in the north. Mass movements to Christianity are not a new phenomenon and recent figures give some indication of their scope. From 1921-31 in Travancore there were 100,000 converts to Christianity, of which it has been estimated 70,000 were members of the four largest depressed castes. During the same period in Madras there were 275,000 converts, practically all from the Depressed Classes.

Though none of these three religions in theory at least recognizes caste distinctions and untouchability, in practice conversion does not always have the effect of removing caste disabilities.

Islam in India has, of course, been considerably influenced by Hindu social customs. There are among Muslims "caste distinctions which indicate social status as clearly as they do in Hindu society." ^{52/} It is therefore inevitable that the members of the Depressed Classes converted to Islam should be assigned to a low place in the Muslim social system. Generally speaking, however, they are not regarded as untouchables and their religious disabilities at any rate entirely disappear.

The community of Sikhs cannot be said to be altogether free from caste distinctions. The sect known as the Mazbi Sikhs consists largely of descendants of converted sweepers. These are enlisted in the Sikh Pioneer Regiment but not in other Sikh class regiments as Sikhs of higher class usually object to serving with them. ^{53/} Even today Chuharas, Chamars, and other low castes tend to join this sect of the Sikhs. ^{54/} On the basis of the information available it is impossible to say whether or not the general status of the Depressed Classes is improved by conversion to Sikhism.

As far as Christians are concerned, "Caste is admittedly observed by Catholics, while some Protestants who profess not to admit it do admit a ban on commensality, and the Catholics appear to use caste marks in some cases, and there was a cause celebre in the Madras courts in which an over-zealous imported priest, who had destroyed as unchristian the wall which ran the length of the aisle to separate the caste from the outcaste Christians, was prosecuted by his flock in consequence." ^{55/} Other instances of the persistence of caste distinctions are numerous. The Times of India for February 19, 1937 reported that at Kumbakonam in Madras Presidency rioting occurred when caste Catholics refused to permit outcaste Catholics to sit with them in church. In 1928 a deputation from the Christian Depressed Classes waited upon the Indian Statutory Commission and demanded special representation in the legislatures for Depressed Christians, claiming that as soon as they became Christian they were oppressed by the caste Christians. In certain parts of India, notably Travancore, Gujarat, and parts of the Deccan, it is said that Christians descended from the Depressed Classes are denied access to village wells, schools, etc., just as are the non-Christian members of this group.

On the whole, however, it is probably safe to say that, although disabilities may continue for some time, conversion does eventually lead to improvement in status.

Recently in 1935 a new impetus was given to the Depressed Classes to change their religion when Ambedkar called upon the low castes to abandon Hinduism and embrace another religion. This seems to have been more in the nature of a threat to caste Hindus than a serious suggestion for the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar stated at the

time that he would not advise his followers to take any definite step for a period of four or five years, during which he would see how successful were the efforts of caste Hindus to purge Hinduism of untouchability. Some statements from a handbill addressed to the Depressed Classes of Hyderabad by the Ambedkar Yuvajana Samaj (Ambedkar Youth Association), though of doubtful importance, are interesting in this connection. In spite of the society's name Ambedkar probably had little responsibility in the matter.

"(2) If you want to recover the manhood you have lost, change your religion.

(14) The religion that teaches that to treat some people as human beings is sin against God is no religion; it is a poisonous disease.

(15) The religion that encourages one to handle animals but teaches that it is polluting to touch certain men is no religion; it is a bundle of evil principles.

(18) Hindu society teaches that God resides in every living thing and at the same time treats human beings as less than animals. Leave it. Hindus are hypocrites. Beware.

(19) Hindu society gives sugar to ants and milk to snakes but to thirsting men never a drop of water. Leave it. Hindus are first class hypocrites." 55-a/

Actually the response to Ambedkar's suggestion has been more marked among the leaders of non-Hindu religions than among the Depressed Classes. Muslims and Christians especially have repeatedly invited Ambedkar and his followers to join them. So far Ambedkar has taken no definite step in the direction of any religion.

IV. DEPRESSED CLASSES AS A POLITICAL MINORITY

The prominent position occupied today by the Depressed Classes as the second largest minority in India has, like the entire minority problem, a comparatively recent origin. The present status of this group is due to the interaction of several forces in Indian social and political life. These are (1) the policy of the Government of India which has operated so as to foster separatist tendencies in the Indian population; (2) the efforts of the Indian National Congress on the one hand to unify the various elements in India in order to present a united front in the struggle for independence, and on the other hand, under Gandhi's leadership, to resist all attempts to weaken or divide the Hindu religious community; (3) the communal interests of the Hindu Mahasabha and the consequent opposition of this group to any program which would diminish its numerical strength; (4) attempts on the part of the Depressed Classes themselves to rise in the social scale by means of political power.

A. The Depressed Classes and the Government of India.

It may be said that the history of the minority problem begins in 1909 with the Minto-Morley Reforms, under which the legislative councils for the first time contained a substantial representative element. It was at this time that separate electorates were created for the Muslim community. However, these reforms gave no special recognition to the Depressed Classes.

1. The Depressed Classes under the Government of India Act of 1919. Under the Government of India Act of 1919 embodying the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals, a larger measure of self-government was conceded, legislative councils were greatly expanded, and the proportion of elected members increased to 70 percent of the total. The nature of the franchise, based chiefly on property qualifications, was such, however, that it was considered impossible to secure by means of election a sufficient number of representatives from the lower castes. Therefore in order to accomplish this the Act provided for their representation by nomination. The number of members nominated to represent these castes in the legislative councils differed from province to province. In accordance with the electoral rules Madras appointed five; Bihar and Orissa and the Central Provinces and Berar, two each; Bengal, Bombay, and the United Provinces, one each; in Assam the Depressed Classes and Backward Tracts (areas inhabited chiefly by primitive tribes) together were represented by one nominated member. No provision was made for representation of the Depressed Classes in the Punjab. Although the Act did not specify that the Depressed Classes be represented in the Central Legislative Assembly, in practice one of the seats filled by nomination was assigned to this group. M.C. Rajah from Madras was nominated in 1927 and remained a member of the Assembly until 1937. There was no representative of the Depressed Classes in the Council of State.

It should be noted that the provincial governors were not required to select their nominees from the ranks of the Depressed Classes. In Bihar, for example, the nominated members were "believed to be in sympathy with the class, though not as a rule actually of that class." 56/ In a few councils members of the Depressed Classes were able to secure seats through the general elections. A Chamar (leather-worker) was elected to the first Council of the Central Provinces under the 1919 Act, his success being attributed to the fact that competition was slight on account of the boycott of the elections by the Indian National Congress; and several members of the Bengal Councils belonged to the Depressed Classes.

2. Work of the Reforms Enquiry Committee. The Reforms Enquiry Committee appointed at the instance of the British Labour Government in 1924 to study the working of the Government of India under the 1919 Act

made certain recommendations regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes. This committee, composed of ten members, was divided in its opinion as to the significance of the findings and the proposals to be made. The majority report recommended an increase in the number of Depressed Class representatives in the provincial councils. It was proposed that representation be by election if the local governments could formulate a method of election; that otherwise the system of nomination be continued. The minority report contained the following recommendation: "As regards the representation of the depressed and working classes, we are of the opinion that the correct principle to follow would be to lower the franchise so as to give them a chance, through the open door of election in general electorates; but where practical considerations point to a different conclusion, we would suggest that for the next few years only special constituencies might be formed for them." 57/ The recommendations adopted at this time, however, were those contained in the majority report. None of the provincial governments being able to propose a scheme whereby the Depressed Classes might elect their own representatives, an increase in the number of members nominated was the sole alternative and even this measure was adopted by some of the provinces only. In Madras the number was increased from five to ten, in Bombay from one to two, in the Central Provinces and Berar from two to four. The United Provinces Government were "opposed to any increase in the number of nominated members to represent these classes and they were of the opinion that the time had not come for any widening of the general electorate so as to admit the members of these classes to the franchise." 58/ The Government of Bihar and Orissa stated that the "filling of the existing two seats by nomination has always presented great difficulty and an increase of nominated members might well have been misconstrued as an attempt to strengthen support for Government." 59/ Bengal likewise did not increase the number of representatives for these classes.

To summarize, the Government of India under the Act of 1919, recognized the desirability of special representation for the Depressed Classes and implemented this by the nomination of members to the Legislative Councils and the Central Assembly. In the field of local government also this principle was widely adopted and nomination was the most common method of securing representation of the Depressed Classes on municipal and district Boards.

3. Indian Statutory Commission and the Depressed Classes. The Government of India Act of 1919 provided for a commission to be appointed at the end of ten years to study the system of government and to report concerning modifications to be made. The Indian Statutory Commission, as this was called, investigated conditions in India and their recommendations to a large extent formed the basis for the Act of 1935 under which India is governed today.

In the course of their inquiry the Commission received memoranda submitted by the Government of India and that of each governor's province, reports of committees appointed by the provincial legislative councils; and in addition they obtained evidence from a number of non-official sources.

In regard to the question of the Depressed Classes the Government of India referred the Commission to the separate provincial governments, most of which proposed measures to secure the representation of the Depressed Classes in the legislatures. The principle of nomination as it had been applied under the Act of 1919 was favored by Bihar and Orissa, Bengal, Madras, and the United Provinces, generally on the grounds that no other means of securing their representation was feasible. The Government of Bihar and Orissa considered that the Depressed Classes were too scattered and unorganized to be formed into constituencies and probably too backward to choose their own representatives. The Government of Bengal qualified their decision by stating that nomination should be resorted to only if a "suitable" electorate could not be devised. Apparently satisfied with the

results of the nomination system, the Government of Madras stated that "the nomination of members of these classes...has sufficed in matters in which they were specially concerned to compel parties to canvass their votes and even to support or initiate measures affecting their social or other disabilities. 60/ The Government of the United Provinces proposed to nominate five members to represent the Depressed Classes and other backward classes on the grounds that these sections of the population were unable to look after their own interests. No suggestions for the representation of the Depressed Classes were made by the Government of Bombay as a whole. Two of the members favored indirect election for all communities and proposed that three separate constituencies be created in the three divisions of the presidency. Four seats were to be reserved for the Depressed Classes in these three constituencies, a number which was based on the percentage of voters from the community, although the estimated total population entitled them to six seats. The Government of Assam likewise advocated separate constituencies, two in the Surma Valley for backward classes and six in the Assam valley for the primitive tribes and the backward or Depressed Classes. According to the proposals of the Government of the Punjab, the franchise was to be considerably lowered and it was considered that under these new circumstances the Depressed Classes would be able to secure representation in the agricultural tenant vote. Further than this the Government of the Punjab did not concern itself with the Depressed Classes. The official attitude is summed up in the following statement: "They do not constitute a special problem in this province and it would be difficult to suggest any satisfactory electorate for them. As a result of these considerations we would exclude them." 61/

The proposals of the committees appointed by the various provincial legislative councils did not differ substantially from those put forth by the provincial governments. The Madras Committee considered that constituencies for the Depressed Classes, if formed, would be too large in view of the number of seats that could be allotted to this group, and favored a modified form of nomination. Out of regard for the wishes of the Depressed Classes who desired an element of election at some stage, the committee recommended that Depressed Classes associations in the various districts of the province elect twice as many candidates as were required from which panel the governor should select his nominees. The Bombay Committee, like the Government of Bombay, favored the system of reserving seats in certain constituencies where the Depressed Classes were numerous. However, they proposed to reserve ten seats, instead of four, in ten constituencies. The Bengal Committee seems to have been rather uninterested in the whole problem. Representation by nomination was advocated, if special constituencies could not be created. The committee had been unable to "probe the possibilities of doing this". The United Provinces Committee followed closely the suggestions made by one member, Rama Charana, who in an unofficial capacity submitted a memorandum to the Indian Statutory Commission on behalf of the Depressed Classes in which his demands were more extreme. The Legislative Committee proposed to reserve fifteen seats for the Depressed Classes to be filled by nomination. This arrangement was to last for ten years only at the end of which special constituencies were to be created if it was found that the Depressed Classes could not secure representation in the general constituencies. In the majority report of the Punjab Committee no specific suggestions regarding the representation of the Depressed Classes were made. The Committee, however, recommended that members be nominated to represent sections or interests which were otherwise unrepresented in the legislatures. The formation of separate constituencies for the Depressed Classes, if there were "no insuperable difficulties," was advocated by the Bihar and Orissa Committee, the members of which declared themselves against the principle of nomination for any purpose. Furthermore they were of the opinion that the number of legislators to represent the Depressed Classes should be "suitably" increased.

It must be noted that all these provincial committees in making proposals for the representation of the Depressed Classes had in mind a

very restricted franchise based on property and educational qualifications. With the exception of Bihar and Orissa and Madras, all committees favored a wider franchise than obtained under the Act of 1919, but the extent of the franchise proposed was still too limited to enable the Depressed Classes to return their candidates in general elections. The committee appointed by the Assam Legislative Council, however, favored universal suffrage for all persons not less than 25 years of age, for the reason, among others, that it made unnecessary arrangements for special representation of backward communities. It was further recommended by this committee that the governor be empowered to nominate five members to the legislative council as a method of ensuring adequate representation of communities or classes which had been unable to obtain it through election.

In addition to these official proposals, the Indian Statutory Commission received memoranda and heard evidence from a number of associations and persons interested in the welfare of the Depressed Classes. Only Bihar and Orissa, the Punjab, and Assam were unrepresented by non-official bodies.

The Bengal Depressed Classes Association and the All-Bengal Namasudra Association agreed in demanding (1) adult franchise and (2) separate electorates with seats reserved on the basis of the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the total population. It was claimed that the Depressed Classes of Bengal numbered eleven and a half millions. These societies justified their demand for separate electorates on the grounds that previous experience had proved that in joint electorates they had no chance of returning their own candidates; they accused the caste Hindus of having put up an "illiterate cobbler" to represent the Depressed Classes in order to disgrace the group.

From Madras two associations presented claims which have in common only an insistence on reserved seats. The committee appointed by a conference of the Depressed Classes of the Madras Presidency considered that the Depressed Classes men would require training for some years in local self-governing institutions before being given the privilege of voting for the legislative council. It was proposed that the Madras Provincial Depressed Classes Federation elect representatives from the Depressed Classes, and that the persons so selected be nominated by the governor to the council. The ten seats reserved for the Depressed Classes were to be increased to eighteen, so that representation would be proportionate to their numerical strength in the province. With regard to representation in local bodies, this organization suggested separate electorates with lower franchise qualifications for the Depressed Classes than for the rest of the population. The All-India Adi-Dravida Maha Jana Sabha (General Association of Adi-Dravidas) together with the Madras Arundhati Maha Jana Sabha requested that in the legislative councils one-fourth of the seats be reserved for the Depressed Classes, which, they claimed, were one-sixth of the total population. It was proposed to fill these seats half by governor's nomination and half by election through separate electorates. These two societies also asked for separate electorates and adult franchise for securing representation in local bodies.

On behalf of the Depressed Classes of Bombay, the Depressed Classes Institute of Bombay and the Depressed India Association submitted memoranda to the Statutory Commission. The first of these societies, represented by Mr. Ambedkar, demanded that twenty-two seats out of one hundred and forty be reserved in the legislative council. This was seven more than the Depressed Classes of Bombay would have had on a proportionate basis. Election was to take place in general constituencies on the basis of a lowered franchise. However, in oral examination Ambedkar stated that unless adult franchise was granted, he was in favor of separate electorates. The Depressed India Association wanted one-ninth (fifteen) of the seats to be reserved for the Depressed Classes, half to be filled by nomination, half by election. They advocated separate electorates for the municipal and district boards with adult suffrage for the Depressed Classes only.

Memoranda concerning the Depressed Classes of the United Provinces were submitted by private individuals as well as associations. Rama Charana, a member of the Legislative Council, asked for separate electorates, while Ram Prasad Ahir, also M.L.C., wanted reserved seats to be filled by nomination. The All-India Shri Jatav Mahasabha, a society of Chamars, likewise wanted seats reserved. This group did not specify the manner in which the seats were to be filled. The memorandum requested the members of the commission to "judge for yourselves as to whether or not there was any connection between the system of separate electorates and the present communal unrest in India, and in the light of that opinion to decide whether it would be to the advantage of the Depressed Classes to have a separate electorate for themselves." 62/ The Kahar Sudharak Mahasabha, an organization of Shudras (the lowest of the four main castes), who considered themselves depressed though touchable (the Kahars were not included with the Depressed Classes in the 1931 census) demanded 60 percent representation to be secured by means of "separate electorates or by Electoral College System or by proportional representation in all the representative bodies." 63/

The All-India Depressed Classes Association, claiming to represent the Depressed Classes of India as a whole, proposed that the franchise be on the basis of an annual income of Rs.96 (\$28.80); and that separate electorates be established for the four major communities (Brahmans, Muslims, Depressed Classes, and Non-Brahmans), with the number of representatives from each community in proportion to its population. For the Central Provinces and Berar, however, it was recommended that for a period of twenty years persons selected by the Association be nominated to the central and provincial legislatures to represent the Depressed Classes.

On the basis of the demands and proposals presented by the provincial governments, the committees appointed by the provincial legislative councils, and the various non-official organizations, the Indian Statutory Commission had to consider three alternative means of providing for representation of the Depressed Classes in governing bodies: (1) nomination; (2) election of members in general electorates; (3) election in separate electorates or in special territorial constituencies.

In making their recommendations the members of the Commission considered each of the alternatives. Nomination of representatives was rejected on the ground that under this system the Depressed Classes would have no opportunities for training in self-government. Separate electorates, although retained for the Muslim community, were not recommended for the Depressed Classes. The views of the Commission on this subject are worth quoting: "Separate electorates would no doubt be the safest method of securing the return of an adequate number of persons who enjoy the confidence of the Depressed Classes, but we are averse from stereotyping the differences between the Depressed Classes and the remainder of the Hindus by such a step which we consider would introduce a new and serious bar to their ultimate political amalgamation with others. Such a course would be all the more difficult to justify in those provinces where the breaking down of barriers has advanced furthest. If separate electorates have to be maintained for certain classes which have already secured them, that is no reason for bringing other cases within this mode of treatment, if it can be avoided. A separate electorate means, as a preliminary, a precise definition of all who are covered by the term, and the boundary would be in some cases difficult to draw. It means stigmatising each individual voter in the list, and militates against the process which is already beginning, and which needs to be in every way encouraged--that of helping those who are depressed to rise in the social and economic scale." 64/ The possibility of forming special constituencies for the Depressed Classes is not discussed by the Commission. Since there is not in practice a great deal of

difference between separate electorates and special territorial constituencies it may be assumed that the same objections led the Commission to reject this method.

The Commission proposed to reserve seats for the Depressed Classes in general constituencies, to be filled by election on the basis of a generally lowered franchise. In order to ensure the return of suitable representatives for the Depressed Classes, it was recommended that rules be made, according to which candidates for election would be certified by the provincial governors, where necessary or possible after consultation with Depressed Class organizations. The governor was also to be empowered, in the event of an insufficiency of suitable candidates, to authorize persons to stand for election who, though not members of the Depressed Classes, were interested in their welfare, or to nominate them to the legislative council to fill the reserved seats. Because of the fact that the Commission was doubtful as to whether a sufficient number of adequately equipped representatives would be available if seats were reserved for the Depressed Classes according to their percentage of the population, it was proposed that "the proportion of the number of such reserved seats to the total number of seats in all the Indian general constituencies should be three-quarters of the proportion of the Depressed Classes to the total population of the electoral area of the province. 65/

These measures were conceived by the Commission as temporary expedients only and it was hoped that eventually the Depressed Classes would achieve a status which would make unnecessary any such safeguards.

Acting more or less independently of the Indian Statutory Commission, the Indian Central Committee, appointed by the Viceroy and consisting of five members from the Assembly and four from the Council of State, presented a report shortly after the publication of that of the Indian Statutory Commission. In this report communal electorates were condemned except in a few "exceptional cases," among which were the Depressed Classes of Madras; 66/

4. The Round Table Conferences and the Minority Problem. In November 1930, shortly after the publication of these reports, the first Round Table Conference met in London to consider the proposals. Representatives of the various groups and interests in British India and the native states were invited in the hope that the discussions would lead to an agreement on the main provisions to be embodied in the proposed constitution. At this, as well as subsequent conferences, the minority problem was of paramount importance and a sub-committee with Prime Minister MacDonald as chairman was set up to consider the demands of the various groups.

The Depressed Classes were of course only one of many communities presenting claims for special consideration, but from the point of view of numbers at least they were second in importance only to the Muslims. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Rai Bahadur R. Srinivasan represented the Depressed Classes. On behalf of this group they demanded adequate representation in both legislatures, adult suffrage, and separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. The system of separate electorates was to last for ten years, after which, if the Depressed Classes consented, and if all adults were enfranchised, electorates were to be joint with reserved seats. 67/ For various reasons little if anything was accomplished at this first conference, and the sub-committee on minorities was unable to reach any agreement.

The second Round Table Conference met eight months later. This time Gandhi was present as the representative of the Indian National Congress. Ambedkar and Srinivasan as before represented the Depressed Classes. Once again the treatment of minorities proved to be an insuperable obstacle in the way of a settlement. The difficulty seems to have been due in part to the attitude adopted by Gandhi who claimed to speak

for all elements in the country and denied that the spokesmen for the minority groups were truly representative, on the ground that they were not the elected representatives of the various parties but merely nominees of Government. According to Subhas Chandra Bose, Ambedkar "wanted to come to an agreement with the Mahatma whereby a certain number of seats would be reserved in the legislatures for the Depressed Classes on the basis of a common electorate for all sections of the Hindus. At that time the Mahatma would not think of any such compromise." 68/ Meanwhile Gandhi had adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the Muslims promising not to oppose their demands provided they voted against separate electorates for the other minorities. But the Muslims rejected this offer. As a result of all this Ambedkar and Srinivasan cooperated with the Muslims, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, and Europeans in jointly demanding separate electorates for all these minority groups. With regard to the Depressed Classes it was stipulated that a change to joint electorates and reserved seats should not be made until after twenty years, and until adult suffrage for the community should be established. Neither Hindu nor Sikh representatives agreed to these proposals and the minorities committee again reported that it had been unable to arrive at a solution to the problem. The Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, who was chairman of the committee, offered to mediate provided every member of the committee agreed to abide by his decision. The members did not agree to this but it was on the basis of this offer that MacDonald made the Communal Award in 1932.

5. The Communal Award and the Poona Pact. Shortly after the Round Table Conference was adjourned the Lothian Committee arrived in India to determine the franchise and electoral seats. In March 1932 Gandhi wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare, then Secretary of State for India, that he would fast unto death if Government decided to give separate electorates to the Depressed Classes. Hoare replied that nothing could be settled until the Lothian Committee made its report. MacDonald's decision, which became known as the Communal Award, was announced in August 1932. Paragraph 9 of this decision reads:

"Members of the 'depressed classes' qualified to vote will vote in a general constituency. In view of the fact that for a considerable period these classes would be unlikely, by this means alone, to secure any adequate representation in the legislature, a number of special seats will be assigned to them as shown in the table. These seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the 'depressed classes' electorally qualified will be entitled to vote. Any person voting in such a special constituency will, as stated above, be also entitled to vote in a general constituency. It is intended that these constituencies should be formed in selected areas where the depressed classes are most numerous, and that except in Madras, they should not cover the whole area of the province.

"In Bengal it seems possible that in some general constituencies a majority of the voters will belong to the depressed classes. Accordingly, pending further investigation, no number has been fixed for the members to be returned from the special depressed class constituencies in that Province. It is intended to secure that the depressed classes should obtain not less than 10 seats in the Bengal Legislature.

"The precise definition in each Province of those who (if electorally qualified) will be entitled to vote in the special depressed class constituencies has not yet been finally determined. It will be based as a rule on the general principles advocated in the Franchise Committee's Report. Modification may, however, be found necessary in some Provinces in Northern India where the application of the general criteria of untouchability might result in a definition unsuitable in some respects to the special conditions of the Province.

"His Majesty's Government do not consider that these special depressed classes constituencies will be required for more than a limited time. They intend that the constitution shall provide that they shall come to an end after 20 years if they have not previously been abolished under the general powers of electoral revision referred to in paragraph 6." 69/

The provisions made for the Depressed Classes differed in two respects from the communal electorates for Muslims and other communities. In the first place the Depressed Classes were to vote in general as well as in special constituencies. Secondly, the special constituencies except in Madras were not to cover the whole area of the province.

Seats were to be reserved for the Depressed Classes as follows:

Madras	18
Bombay	10
Bengal	(to be settled later)
United Provinces	12
Punjab	0
Bihar and Orissa	7
Central Provinces	10
Assam	4
North West Frontier Province	0
Sind	0

The Award met with considerable criticism in India. None of the parties interested in the Depressed Classes was pleased. Ambedkar considered that the number of seats reserved was too small; Rajah, leader of another faction of the Depressed Classes, objected to the separation of the group from the main body of Hindus. Gandhi was not appreciative of the differences between special constituencies and communal electorates. He wrote to MacDonald, "The mere fact of the depressed classes having double votes does not protect them or Hindu society in general from being disrupted. In the establishment of a separate electorate at all for the depressed classes, I sense the injection of a poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good whatever to the depressed classes. You will please permit me to say that, no matter how sympathetic you may be, you cannot come to a correct decision on a matter of such vital and religious importance to the parties concerned. I should not be against even over-representation of the depressed classes. What I am against is their statutory separation, even in a limited form, from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it." 70/

In accordance with his previously announced decision Gandhi began to fast, and as a result a compromise was reached. Gandhi and the Depressed Class leaders formulated the Poona Pact whereby special constituencies for the Depressed Classes were abolished, while the number of seats reserved for them in the provincial legislatures was increased. In addition to this the Depressed Classes were given a certain percentage of the general seats in the Federal Assembly.

6. The Depressed Classes Under the Government of India Act of 1935. The Government of India Act of 1935, embodying the terms of the Poona Pact, provides for the nomination of four candidates for each seat in the provincial legislature, in a primary election by Depressed Class voters only. The final election of members is by joint election with caste Hindus. There are no reserved seats for the Depressed Classes in the provincial legislative councils. These upper chambers were established in only five provinces--Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces, and Bihar. A certain number of seats in the councils are filled by governor's nominations, an arrangement intended to secure representatives of the Depressed Classes and women. 71/

According to the First Schedule of the 1935 Act election of the representatives of Depressed Classes to the Federal Assembly is as follows: "(a) There shall be a primary electorate consisting of all persons who were successful candidates at the primary elections held, in accordance with the provisions of the Fifth Schedule of this Act, on the occasion of the last general election of members of the Legislative Assembly of the Province for the purpose of selecting candidates for seats reserved for members of the scheduled castes; (b) the primary electorate so constituted shall choose such number of persons as is equal to four times the number of general seats in the Federal Assembly reserved in the Province for members of the scheduled castes; and (c) no person who is not so chosen shall be qualified to be chosen to fill such a seat." 72/ The final electorates for the Federal Assembly in all cases consists of the members of the provincial assembly so that the Depressed Classes candidates are elected by all members who hold general seats.

The following tables (IV and V) reproduced from the Government of India Act of 1935 give the number of seats for all communities in the federal and provincial assemblies.

Since federation has not yet come into effect, the present composition of the Central Assembly and the Council of State is not according to the provisions of the 1935 Act. In respect of these bodies the 1919 Act still holds: the Depressed Classes have one nominated representative in the Assembly who at the present time is Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj; there is no representative in the Council of State.

7. Further Developments Affecting the Depressed Classes as a Minority. In addition to the establishment of separate electorates or other mechanisms whereby the Indian minority groups are enabled to return their own representatives to the legislatures, the Government of India has recognized certain minorities as separate groups in recruitment to all services under their administration. The principle of communal representation in the services was first recognized in 1925 when a resolution was adopted according to which one-third of all vacancies was reserved for redress of communal inequalities. None of the minority groups were satisfied with this method. The memoranda submitted to the Indian Statutory Commission on behalf of the Depressed Classes without exception demanded that the right of the Depressed Classes to a share in the services be recognized. Ambedkar, for example, demanded that the Depressed Classes be given priority for 30 years in recruitment to all posts.

In 1934 the rights of certain minorities to a share in the appointments to the various services was specifically recognized by a resolution of the Government of India. The communities declared to be minorities by this resolution were Muslims, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, Sikhs, and Parsees. The Depressed Classes were not included, nor were they given any fixed proportion of the annual vacancies. However, it was arranged that "duly qualified" members of the Depressed Classes might be nominated to the services even though ordinarily recruitment was by competition.

It has recently been reported that the Government of India has reached a decision to "declare the Scheduled Castes a Minority for the purposes of recruitment to Government services other than the Central Services such as the Indian Civil Service. A definite quota will be allotted to the Scheduled Castes for the purposes of recruitment to Government employ, both under the Central and Provincial Governments. The question of allotting a percentage in the Central Services is now engaging the attention of the authorities here." 73/

IV. TABLE OF SEATS

The Federal Assembly
Representatives of British India.

General Seats:--												
	Total Seats	Total of general Seats	General seats reserved for Sche- duled castes	Sikh Seats	Muham- madan Seats	Anglo- Indian Seats	Euro- pean Seats	Indian Christian Seats	Seats for repre- sentatives of com- merce and industry	Land holders seats	Seats for repre- sentatives of labor	Women's Seats
Madras	37	19	4	—	8	1	1	2	2	1	1	2
Bombay	30	13	2	—	6	1	1	1	3	1	2	2
Bengal	37	10	3	—	17	1	1	1	3	1	2	2
United Provinces	37	19	3	—	12	1	1	1	—	1	1	1
Punjab	30	6	1	6	14	—	1	1	—	1	—	1
Bihar	30	16	2	—	9	—	1	1	—	1	1	1
Central Provinces and Berar	15	9	2	—	3	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
Assam	10	4	1	—	3	—	1	1	—	—	1	—
North-West Frontier Province	5	1	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Orissa	5	4	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sind	5	1	—	—	3	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
British Baluchistan	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Delhi	2	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ajmer-Merwara	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Coorg	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Non-Provincial Seats	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	1	—
Totals	250	105	19	6	82	4	8	8	11	7	10	9

V. TABLE OF SEATS
Provincial Legislative Assemblies

[illegible]

B. The Depressed Classes and the Indian National Congress.

1. Congress Policy and Program up to 1937. The Indian National Congress as a political body is not primarily interested in social reform. This is due to the fact that its energies are mainly directed towards gaining independence. Furthermore a majority of the Congress leaders come from the middle and upper classes and are not revolutionary in outlook; these among them such as Pandit Nehru, who hold more advanced opinions regarding Indian social problems consider freedom and independence necessary preliminaries to effective reforms. To Gandhi's personal influence and the British Government's recognition of the Depressed Classes as a separate group in Indian society may be attributed the fact that Congress has devoted a considerable part of its energies to Depressed Class problems.

As early as 1917 Congress adopted a resolution urging "upon the people of India the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon the Depressed Classes, the disabilities being of a most vexatious and oppressive character, subjecting those classes to considerable hardship and inconvenience." 74/ The date of this first resolution coincides with the visit of Mr. Montagu to India, at which time the question of the Depressed Classes "claimed the nation's attention as forming an important factor in national reconstruction." 75/

The meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held in Ahmadabad in 1921 called for volunteers for non-cooperation. The pledge to be taken by each volunteer included the following clause: "As a Hindu I believe in the justice and necessity of removing the evil of untouchability and shall on all possible occasions seek personal contact with, and endeavour to render service to, the submerged classes". 76/ Another resolution passed at the same time called on all Hindus who did not believe in non-cooperation to interest themselves in removing untouchability and in improving the condition of the Depressed Classes.

The following year the Congress working committee met at Bardoli. Civil disobedience was suspended and in its place a program of constructive work was proposed. "Constructive work" included among other things the removal of untouchability. 77/

Again in 1923 resolutions to remove untouchability were passed by the All-India Congress Committee in Nagpur. "Since then," Gandhi has written, "the Hindu members of the Congress have taken upon themselves the responsibility of ridding Hinduism of the curse of untouchability." 78/

Another resolution calling for the "amelioration" of the Depressed Classes was moved by Motilal Nehru at the All-India Congress Committee in 1926. 79/

More serious attempts to attack the problem of untouchability were made in 1928. It seems a reasonable inference that Congress was influenced by the activities at this time of the Indian Statutory Commission. In the program laid down it was stated that, "It shall be the duty of all Congressmen, being Hindus, to do all they can to remove untouchability and help the so-called untouchables in every possible way in their attempt to remove their disabilities and better their condition." 80/

As a further step a committee was formed to carry on a campaign against untouchability. As a result of its efforts a number of temples, wells, and schools were made available for use by the Depressed Classes.

In 1931, shortly before the Round Table Conference was to meet in London to consider the future constitution of India, the

Congress working committee issued a statement on the communal question. Although no mention was made of the Depressed Classes several references to the minority problem are of interest. In one section it is declared that: "Protection of political and other rights of minority communities in the various Provinces shall be the concern and be within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government". 81/ The statement called for adult suffrage or at least a franchise sufficiently extensive to "reflect in the electoral roll the proportion in the population of every community"; 82/ and for joint electorates. All communities were to have a fair share in the public services, and the rights of minorities in the formation of ministries were to be recognized by convention. At the same time, the anti-untouchability committee, appointed in 1928, and dissolved after two years, was revived. 83/

The general views of the Congress regarding questions of caste are set forth in the resolutions on Fundamental Rights and Duties adopted in the same year. The following sections of the resolutions are pertinent;

"(4) All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of caste, creed or sex.

(5) No disability attaches to any citizen, by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honor, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.

(6) All citizens have equal rights and duties in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public resort, maintained out of State or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public." 84/

The part played by Gandhi as the representative of the Congress at the Round Table Conference, and the subsequent events at Poona leading to the Poona Pact, have already been discussed.

Although Gandhi had for a long time been a champion of the Depressed Classes, after the Poona Pact he increased his efforts on their behalf. In 1933 and 1934 he spent ten months in a tour of India for the purpose of studying the problem of untouchability. Under his leadership the movement concentrated on religious uplift. He has written: "In my opinion it [temple entry] is a deciding test as to whether the orthodox Hindu mind has responded to the call of time or not and whether it is prepared to purge Hinduism of the black mark of untouchability. Nothing in my opinion will strike the imagination of the Hindu mind including Harijans as throwing open all public temples to them precisely on the same terms as caste Hindus." 85/

In recent years a number of temples have been opened to the untouchables in Indian States as well as in British India, but there is not much evidence that the general condition of the Depressed Classes is materially improved. The most prominent of the Depressed Class leaders, Ambedkar, has minimized the effectiveness of this type of reform in the total picture. He has said, "As regards temple entry, the Depressed Classes all over India have made it clear to Mr. Gandhi that they will have nothing to do with it regarded as a final solution to the problem of the removal of untouchability. They would accept it only if Mr. Gandhi would make it clear that it was the first step in a general reform of Hindu society involving the breakup of the caste system." 86/

Other features of the program of reform at this time include public inter-dining and the opening of village wells to the Depressed Classes. But one observer has written, "These events seem to partake more of the nature of indulgent concessions to a popular leader than

of logical, sincere steps in a well-ordered program of reform. Perhaps this was inevitable in view of the coercive force of Gandhi's fasts, but the fact remains that most of the wells so thrown open to public use were later quietly brought back into the category of restricted utilities, and most programs of intercaste dining inaugurated with public feasting ended where they began." 87/

In spite of the fact that evidences of material benefit to the Depressed Classes are not very apparent, there can be no doubt that Gandhi and, largely through his efforts, the Indian National Congress have enormous influence over the depressed masses. Ambedkar himself does not underestimate the power of Gandhi's hold over the untouchables.

Figures to show the Depressed Class membership in the Congress Party are not available, although it is known that large numbers from this group belong to the Party. Some indication of the strength of the Congress Party among the untouchables is afforded by the success of Congress candidates in contesting the seats reserved for the Depressed Classes in the 1937 elections. The following table shows the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the number won by Congress candidates. It will be remembered that in Sind and the Northwest Frontier Province there are no seats reserved for this group.

Province	Seats Reserved for the Scheduled Castes	No. of Seats won by Congress
United Provinces	20	17
Assam	7	1
Central Provinces and Berar	20	8
Bengal	30	3
Orissa	6	4
Madras	30	27
Punjab	8	1
Bombay	15	3
Bihar	15	15
	151	79

Insofar as there are only 1,780,085 members of the Depressed Classes entitled to vote under the present franchise, the significance of these figures is lessened. Strictly speaking the figures indicate only the strength of the Congress Party among the small enfranchised section of the group. Furthermore the Congress Party was far better organized and equipped to fight the elections than any other. It is suggestive that in Bombay where Ambedkar had built up among the Depressed Classes the Independent Labour Party, his candidates won 12 out of the 15 reserved seats. However, many of the successful non-Congress candidates representing the Depressed Classes later supported the Congress Party in the legislatures, especially in Assam and Bengal. 88/

2. Implementation of the Congress Program, 1937-39. In the 1937 elections Congress won a majority in seven of the provinces. The Party leaders accepted the invitation to form ministries in the provinces where they were in majority only after it was understood that the

provincial governors would not make use of their special powers except in unusual circumstances. Although, according to the Instrument of Instructions the governors were enjoined to see that in each ministry the minorities were represented, under the agreement Congress was given free rein in this matter. This was a live issue in 1937, and the Depressed Class leaders who had been returned to the legislatures on the Congress Party ticket met and passed a resolution to be put before the All-India Congress Committee. It was resolved that "in case the Congress decides to accept office at least one minister and one secretary should be taken in the cabinet from the scheduled caste Congress members in the provinces where the Congress Party forms a ministry." 89/ However, only four ministers from the Depressed Classes were selected. One of these was in Madras, one in Bihar, and two in Assam. (Congress, lacking a majority in Assam, formed a coalition ministry in that Province). In addition four parliamentary secretaries were members of the Depressed Classes: two in the United Provinces, one in Bihar, and one in Madras.

The best indication of the attitude of Congress towards the Depressed Classes are the acts concerning this group passed by the Congress governments. Congress ministries remained in power until November 1939. During this period the following acts were passed:

Madras 1938. Act No. XX was passed to remove the disabilities of certain classes of Hindus in regard to entry into temples in the district of Malabar. This Act provides that if the trustees of a temple receive a requisition signed by 50 Hindu voters (other than those from the Depressed Classes) from the general constituency in which the temple is situated, they shall forward this to the provincial government, which shall then direct the trustees to refer the matter to the voters (other than those belonging to the Depressed Classes) in the constituency, and that if the majority is in favor of opening the temple to the Depressed Classes the trustees shall publish an order to that effect.

Madras 1938. Act No. XXI provides for the removal of civil disabilities among certain classes of Hindus. Paragraph no. 2 of this act states:

"Notwithstanding any law, custom, usage or prescription to the contrary, no Hindu shall, by reason merely of his belonging to any particular community or Class known as Harijans, Untouchables, Depressed Class or the like, be prevented or disabled from being appointed to any public office or enjoying or having access to any public stream, river, well, tank, pathway, sanitary convenience, or means of transport or any secular institution which the general public belonging to all other classes and communities of Hindus have a right to enjoy or have access to or which is dedicated or maintained or licensed for the use of the general public or paid for out of the funds of the State or a local authority; and no Civil, Criminal or Revenue Court in adjudicating any matter or executing any order and no public or local authority in carrying on the affairs entrusted to such authority shall recognize any custom, usage or prescription under which it is sought to impose any civil disability on any person by reason of his belonging to any of the classes or communities aforesaid, or by reason of any acts or omissions on the part of such person which would not furnish grounds for such disability if he did not belong to such class or community." 90/

Madras 1939. Act No. XXII,

"to authorize and indemnify trustees, officers and other persons in respect of entry into and offer of worship in Hindu temples by certain classes of Hindus who by custom or usage are excluded from such entry and worship." 91/

According to this Act, if in the opinion of the trustee, or a majority of the trustees, the worshippers of a temple are generally not opposed to opening the temple to hitherto excluded castes, the trustee may with the consent of the Madras Government declare the temple open to these castes. Under the terms of the Act no suit for damages can be brought against any trustee or other person in authority who, in accordance with the Act, opens the temple to the Depressed Classes.

Events preceding the passing of these Acts in Madras provide an interesting commentary on the relations between Congress and the Depressed Classes. About the time of Gandhi's first fast for the untouchables in 1932, Mr. Kelappan who had been working for the Harijan cause in Malabar, decided to fast in order to persuade the trustees of the Guruvayur Temple in Malabar to open it to the untouchables. Gandhi succeeded in convincing Kelappan that his fast was ethically improper because insufficient notice had been given to the trustees. Kelappan thereupon issued an ultimatum to the trustees which was to expire in three months. Before the time was up a vote was taken and, the majority voting in favor, the temple was opened. 92/

Towards the end of November 1937, the Malabar Temple Entry Conference held at Guruvayur called upon the Congress Ministry to enact legislation permitting temples to be thrown open throughout the province. Mr. Kellappan threatened, if this was not accomplished in 6 months, to start satyagraha. Rajagopalachariar and other ministers of Madras temporized, claiming that public opinion in all districts of the province was not as favorable to such a step as it was in Malabar. 93/

In 1938 M. C. Rajah proposed a bill to give "every congregation of Hindu worshippers the right to decide the question of opening the temples to Harijans...the bill sought to enable Hindu opinion, when it became liberal enough to be translated into action, to express itself without legal impediment." 94/ This bill was also opposed by Rajagopalachariar, although he had himself endeavoured to get an identical bill passed in the Central Legislative Assembly 6 years previously. Rajah was asked to withdraw his bill in favor of one with more limited jurisdiction. This attitude on the part of the Congress Ministers angered Rajah. He accused the Harijan members of the Congress Party of voting against his bill and publicly declared himself in favor of the separate electorates for the Depressed Classes that he had formerly opposed. 95/

The acts passed by the Madras Ministry may be considered as the Congress solution to the problem.

In the Central Provinces, during the Congress term of office, there were two acts passed which concern the Depressed Classes.

Central Provinces Act XXXI of 1939 undertakes to abolish nominations to local bodies and to secure at the same time representation to Harijans, Muslims and women. This act applies to municipal committees and provides that, if a Harijan, a Muslim, or a woman is not elected to the committee, the elected members of the committee shall select a member of the community in question, and if they fail to do so, one shall be nominated by the provincial government.

Central Provinces 1939 Act XXXII amends the Central Provinces Local Self-Government Act of 1920, and secures representation of Harijans, etc., on local bodies such as local boards and district councils by means of the method adopted for municipal committees.

Bombay and Bengal each passed one Act dealing with the Depressed Classes.

Bombay 1939 Act XI. The Bombay Harijan Temple Worship Act.

Bengal 1939 Act XI was passed to "restore separate electorates for Muslims in constituencies of the Calcutta Corporation, provide for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and representation of the Anglo-Indian community and Labour." 96/

3. Criticism of Congress by Depressed Class Leaders. Congress ministries remained in power for only two years, and perhaps this is not an unimpressive list for such a short period. However, Ambedkar and other Depressed Class leaders have been consistently critical of Congress' efforts. Ambedkar in a speech to the Depressed Classes of Ahmadabad in October 1938 is reported to have said that he had no faith that Mahatma Gandhi or the Congress would do any good to the Harijans. He advised them to form a separate organization and to have nothing to do with the Congress movement. 97/

The charges against Congress made by Ambedkar at this time seem somewhat unreasonable. He accused Gandhi of refusing at the Round Table Conference to agree to a reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes, and criticized him for not urging the Congress Party leaders to include Harijan ministers in all the provincial cabinets. He claimed that the Bombay Ministry had done nothing to carry out the recommendations made by the committee to enquire into the condition of the Depressed Classes in the Presidency, appointed by the previous government.

It is true of course, that Gandhi at the Round Table Conference held out against reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes, but as this was achieved by the Poona Pact, there seems little point to Ambedkar's criticism. In regard to the inclusion of Harijans in the provincial cabinets, as has already been noted, there were either ministers or parliamentary secretaries or both, in three out of the seven provinces where the Congress Party formed ministries in 1937; and in the non-Congress Province of Assam, the Congress Party formed a coalition ministry in which there were two Depressed Class ministers. In the other four provinces -- Orissa, Central Provinces, Bombay, and the Northwest Frontier Province -- it is true that there were no representatives of the Depressed Classes in the ministries. However, in the Northwest Frontier Province the number of Depressed Classes was infinitesimal according to the 1931 census, and in the 1941 census the population of this group is recorded as nil; nor are there any seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes in this province. In Bombay Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party captured 12 of the 15 reserved seats; and as he and his party were entirely opposed to the Congress Party and its program, it is difficult to see how the Congress leaders could be expected to include his candidates in the Bombay Ministry. In the two remaining Congress provinces, Central Provinces and Orissa, there is possibly some ground for Ambedkar's complaint. It may be that suitable members from the Depressed Classes were not available, but in the absence of definite information no conclusion can be drawn. It is perhaps worthy of note that the Times of India, March 22, 1937 reported that "a prominent Congress leader let it be known that under no circumstances would it be necessary for a member of the Scheduled Castes to sit in the Cabinet as Congress fully represented the interests of these people." The most that can be said at this point by way of criticism of the Congress Party is that in view of the feeling over the matter it would have been wise of Congress to include a Depressed Class member in all cabinets if this had been in any way possible. The contention that the Bombay Government failed to put into effect measures proposed by the previous government has been emphatically denied by a member of the committee.

4. Present Attitude of Congress. The present attitude of the Congress toward the Depressed Classes as a separate group is not clear. Gandhi seems willing to recognize the need for special treatment of the Harijans. In a statement responding to a speech made by Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons on October 26, 1939, Gandhi, declaring that Indian minorities were able to take care of their own interests, made an exception of the Depressed Classes. 98/ Nehru has gone even farther. A letter addressed to Dr. Sudhir Sen of the Sriniketan Vishwabharti in May 1940 expressed the Congress solution to the minority problem in general: "The Congress is prepared to give the minorities the amplest guarantees, both in regard to mutually agreed fundamental laws of the constitution and in regard to the framing of the constitution itself. Any minority may get its representatives elected by a separate electorate. In all matters strictly pertaining to minority rights, decisions should be by consent of the parties and not merely by a majority of votes. In the event of an agreement not being arrived at on any particular point, the matters may be referred for impartial international arbitration to the League of Nations, or the Hague Court, or any other such body." 99/

C. Depressed Classes and Hindus.

There have been in the past occasional and ineffectual movements for the uplift of untouchables but, by the majority of Hindus, their condition has been accepted as inevitable and, according to the tenets of Hinduism, part of the natural order of society. During the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th several reformist movements developed within Hinduism. Of these, the Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, and the Arya Samaj had a considerable interest in social reform along various lines. All of them condemned the caste system in theory, and some missionary work among the Depressed Classes was carried out, but the practical value of their efforts is questionable. The work of the Depressed Classes Mission Society founded in 1906 has been more effective. Aiming to elevate the social as well as the spiritual condition of the Depressed Classes, the society, according to its own report, has devoted itself to promoting education, providing work, remedying the social disabilities, and preaching the principles of liberal religion, personal character, and good citizenship. In accordance with this program most of the society's work has been along educational lines.

1. Depressed Classes and the Hindu Mahasabha. The recent prominence of the Depressed Classes as a politically important minority has led to an increased interest in this group on the part of the caste Hindus. The Hindu Mahasabha, founded about 1917, although moderately nationalist, is chiefly concerned with preserving the Hindu hegemony in Indian political life. Therefore it views with alarm the prospect of losing a large part of its potential strength in any Hindu-Muslim conflict. The Mahasabha has consistently endeavored to conciliate the Depressed Classes and at the same time has resisted all attempts to separate the Depressed Classes from the main body of Hindus. The program of the Hindu Mahasabha set forth as one of its aims the "amelioration of the condition of all classes of Hindus including the Depressed Classes", 100/ and resolutions have been passed from time to time condemning untouchability. In 1936 the Mahasabha recommended to Hindus the "abolition of all distinctions in the Hindu society based on birth or caste in the sphere of public, social and political life in which such distinctions ought to have no application and are out of date in the present age." 101/ At the same time the Mahasabha recommended giving "equal access to all Hindus irrespective of their particular caste or creed to all public amenities and institutions such as schools, wells, tanks, ghats, places of water supply, hotels, roads, parks, dharamshalas [rest houses] and public places of worship, burning ghats and the like."

In the field of politics the attitude of the Hindu Mahasabha has been one of antagonism towards all separate electorates. At the Round Table Conferences the representatives of the Mahasabha favored joint electorates with safeguards for minorities if necessary. Shortly before the Communal Award was announced Dr. Moonje, one of the most prominent members of the Mahasabha, and M.C. Rajah, head of the Depressed Classes Association, came to an agreement according to which the Depressed Classes were to have seats reserved in the legislatures in proportion to their strength in the population. It is the opinion of one authority that this agreement was not recognized by the Government because of Ambedkar's opposition. 102/ At any rate, the Rajah-Moonje Pact, as it was called, was superseded by the Poona Pact in which Mahasabha leaders, chiefly Pandit Malaviya, had important influence.

In the enthusiasm following Gandhi's fast in protest against the Communal Award, the entire Hindu section of India joined in condemning untouchability. At a public meeting over which Pandit Malaviya presided, it was resolved that all public wells, dharamshalas, roads, schools, crematoriums, burning ghats, etc., be declared open to the Depressed Classes and that all public temples be made available for their use. An All-India Anti-Untouchability League was founded at the same time.

Members of the Hindu Mahasabha have gone to considerable lengths to avoid antagonizing the Depressed Class leaders. When in 1935 Ambedkar threatened to advise the Harijans to give up Hinduism and embrace another religion, Dr. Moonje made no objection. However he did urge Ambedkar to go over to Sikhism in preference to any other faith and promised that if this was done all the concessions obtained for the Depressed Classes under the Poona Pact would be continued. 103/ The working committee of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1939 condemned separate electorates in general but stated as their opinion, that the Depressed Classes "should be given weightage or reservation and special protection for a definite period of time". 104/

2. Hostility of Orthodox Hinduism. While the Mahasabha has been following a policy of conciliation, a few unimportant elements in Hindu society have been frankly hostile to any movement designed to alter the status of the Depressed Classes. The All-India Varnasram Swaraj Sangha is pledged to uphold the caste system and all caste distinctions including untouchability. 105/ The Madras provincial branch of this organization in 1937 sent a telegram to Nehru stating that Sanatanists (advocates of orthodoxy) in Madras would support Congress in all political matters if Congress gave a pledge not to introduce any bill opposed to Hindu religious, social, or socio-religious practices in the legislatures and to oppose those brought by others. Needless to say, Nehru refused to give such a pledge. 106/

Generally speaking, it may be said that the Hindus as a body are alive to the need for remedying the evils of the caste system. However, the Mahasabha, which is the only politically important Hindu group, is extremely conservative. Whether its members contemplate any such radical change in Hindu society as is necessary for real amelioration of the Depressed Classes is very doubtful.

D. Depressed Class Leaders and Parties.

The organization of the Depressed Classes is a recent development in the political life of India. When in 1917 Mr. Montagu received deputations in the course of his study of conditions in India, only one Depressed Class organization offered evidence. Since that time innumerable Depressed Class societies have sprung up. Most of these are local organizations with a small membership and very limited influence, either in national or class affairs. They have

been hampered by lack of funds, and the low standard of education among the Depressed Classes generally has hindered the growth of strong and effective organizations. That a few of them have achieved importance in all-India affairs is due to the ability and political acumen of their leaders.

1. B. R. Ambedkar. The most outstanding of the Depressed Class leaders is Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, a member of the Mahar caste in Bombay. While still a small boy his unusual abilities attracted the attention of the Gaekwar of Baroda, who financed his education and sent him eventually to Columbia University from which he received the degree of Ph.D. in 1917. After further study at the University of Bonn in Germany he went to London University where he took a degree in economics. In 1923 he was called to the bar and for some years had a successful law practice in Bombay. His interests are wide and his publications include the Problem of the Rupee, Evolution of Provincial Finance in India, Caste in India, Small Holdings and Their Remedies, Federation vs. Freedom, and Thoughts on Pakistan. Since 1928 he has played a prominent part in political affairs. At that time, as a nominated member of the Bombay Legislative Council he was one of the committee appointed by the Council to submit a report to the Indian Statutory Commission, and, as the president of the Depressed Classes Institute of Bombay, he presented a memorandum to the Commission on behalf of the Depressed Classes. Later he was selected by the Government to represent the Depressed Classes at the Round Table Conferences in London. In 1936 he founded the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.), the membership of which is drawn largely from the Depressed Classes, though it is not limited to this group. Candidates put up by this party had considerable success in the 1937 elections in Bombay. 107/ Of fifteen Depressed Classes members in the Legislative Assembly, twelve belonged to I.L.P. 108/ Ambedkar was appointed a member to represent labor on the National Defense Council which was set up in 1941. A year later he was given the labor portfolio in the Viceroy's Executive Council, which post he now holds.

It is impossible accurately to estimate the extent of Ambedkar's influence among the Depressed Classes. His own claim that the untouchables all over India accept his leadership is very probably highly exaggerated. Competent observers generally agree that Ambedkar's following is limited to the Mahars of Bombay and the Central Provinces. The members of this caste, to which Ambedkar belongs, in these two provinces number about 2,050,000. If all of these support him, and assuming that an equal number from other castes accept his leadership, 5,000,000, or about one-tenth of all the Depressed Classes is probably a fair estimate of his following. There is little doubt that his influence is growing, but unbiassed opinion holds that as long as Mahatma Gandhi lives, Ambedkar "will find it next to impossible to awaken very large numbers of the Depressed Classes." 109/

As a leader of the Depressed Classes Ambedkar's efforts have been consistently to obtain political power as a means of raising the status of this group. Early in his career he seems to have believed that only in an independent India would the Depressed Classes have an opportunity of obtaining political power. His presidential address to the All-India Depressed Classes Congress in 1930 expresses this view:

"Before the British you were in the loathsome condition due to your untouchability. Has the British Government done anything to remove your untouchability? Before the British you could not draw water from the village well, Has the British Government secured you the right to the well? Before the British you could not enter the temple. Can you enter

now? Before the British you were denied entry into the police force. Does the British Government admit you in the force? Before the British you were not allowed to serve in the military. Is that career now open to you? Gentlemen, to none of these questions you can give an affirmative answer. Those who have held so much power over the country for such a long time must have done some good. But there is certainly no fundamental improvement in your position. So far as you are concerned, the British Government has accepted the arrangements as it found them and has preserved them faithfully in the manner of the Chinese tailor who, when given an old coat as a pattern, produced with pride an exact replica, rents, patches and all. Your wrongs have remained as open sores and they have not been righted

"Nobody can remove your grievances as well as you can, and you cannot remove them unless you get political power in your own hands. No share of this political power can come to you so long as the British Government remains as it is. It is only in a Swaraj constitution that you stand any chance of getting the political power into your own hands without which you cannot bring salvation to your people." 110/

Since 1930 Ambedkar's attitude has somewhat altered, and he recently stated that British rule is preferable to self-government with the Indian National Congress in power. Ambedkar's grudge against the Congress goes back of course to the Round Table Conference and the quarrel with Gandhi over the question of representation of the Depressed Classes. Although the Poona Pact gave the Depressed Classes considerably more than the Communal Award, it did nothing to increase Ambedkar's confidence in the Congress or in Gandhi. At present Ambedkar attributes his distrust of Congress to the fact that Congress ministers discriminated against the minorities during the years they were in power. He has said:

"It is an unfortunate fact that the Congress during its term of office in a majority of provinces should have given cause for this distrust. One does not wish to be censorious about the doings of the Congress during the period it was in office. But there was one act about which there can be no dispute, namely, the exclusion of the minorities from the provincial cabinets. It was not only wrong but a breach of faith and anyone who knows what happened at the Round Table Conference will remember that representation in the cabinet was one of the liveliest issues between the Congress and the minorities. The minorities insisted that the right to representation in the cabinet should be guaranteed to them in the statute. The Congress insisted that it be left to convention. Ultimately a via media was found and that was to insert a clause in the Instrument of Instructions issued to the Governors directing them to see that the minorities were represented in the cabinet.

"Unfortunately when the Congress decided to take office, it made it a condition that the Governor should not exercise his discretionary powers to overrule the Congress ministry...The Congress then proceeded to deny the right of representation in the cabinet which the minorities were hoping would be recognized by the Congress. As I said it was this gross breach of faith which was responsible for the rise of the Muslim League and the mistrust that exists today between the minorities and the Hindu majority." 111/

Actually, Ambedkar's attitude toward the Congress is due to the fact that, rightly or wrongly, he identifies Congress as a body

with the Hindus. It is for this reason that he accuses Congress of being socially reactionary, and declares that the untouchables can hope for nothing from a Congress-controlled government. 112/ Since Congress is by far the strongest political group in the country Ambedkar is unwilling to have the British withdraw unless the grant of Indian independence contains safeguards for the Depressed Classes. Regarding the present situation in India, Ambedkar wholeheartedly supports the British war effort. He has strongly condemned the activities of Congress since August 1942, and has declared his approval of Government's action in arresting the Congress leaders.

Ambedkar's efforts were originally directed towards raising the status of the Depressed Classes within the Hindu group. Politically this meant favoring a system of joint electorates. In 1928 as a member of the Bombay Legislative Committee he submitted a report to the Indian Statutory Commission in which he set forth his views on separate electorates. He sums up a strong and cogent argument by stating that "the case for communal electorates cannot be sustained on any ground which can be said to be reasonable". 113/ At the same time in a memorandum submitted to the Commission on behalf of the Depressed Classes he declared himself in favor of joint electorates, although in oral discussion with members of the Commission he qualified this by stating that unless adult suffrage was granted he preferred separate electorates. It was, as we have seen, the refusal of Gandhi at the Round Table Conference to agree to the reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes that led Ambedkar to join the Muslims in demanding separate electorates for all minorities. Although he accepted the compromise of the Poona Pact, regretting only that Gandhi had not taken the same ~~stand at the Round Table Conference~~, he was not altogether satisfied with the method of electing Depressed Class representatives, on the ground that the primary election was an expensive business. Shortly after the Pact had been made he proposed to Gandhi that it be modified to provide for only one election, "with the understanding that a Depressed Class candidate could not be elected unless he secured a certain fixed proportion of the votes of his own community." 114/ Gandhi did not agree to this and the terms of the original Pact still hold.

Corresponding to Ambedkar's growing conviction that only through complete separation from the Hindu group can the Depressed Classes win political power, is the change in his social program. In the beginning, he endeavoured to raise the status of the Depressed Classes within the Hindu group. Although he warned Gandhi that temple entry was not enough, for a number of years he himself was interested in this question. From 1929 to 1935 he and his followers yearly offered satyagraha at Nasik (Bombay Province) to assert their right to participate in the temple procession. 115/ However, he grew impatient with the progress made by Hindu social reformers in the fight against untouchability and in 1935 advised the Depressed Classes to leave the Hindu fold and embrace any religion which offered them equal social status with other communities. A few members of the community were converted to Islam and a few to Sikhism, but the vast majority took no action whatsoever.

Ambedkar's present stand on the religious question is doubtful. His henchman, Mr. Sivaraj, in private conversation, gives the impression that Ambedkar is no longer interested in having the Depressed Classes as a body join another religion. It seems likely that Ambedkar, having achieved a considerable measure of success as champion of the political rights of the Depressed Classes, is now unwilling to have them merged with any other group. Under the present system of separate electorates for the various religious communities, the Depressed Classes would lose their political identity if they became Muslims, Sikhs, or Christians.

2. Ambedkar's Present Program. The most drastic step in the direction of separation from the Hindus was taken on Ambedkar's recommendation by the All-India Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur in July, 1942. A resolution was passed declaring that no constitution would be acceptable to the Depressed Classes unless:

- (1) it had the consent of the Depressed Classes; (2) it recognized that the Depressed Classes are separate from the Hindus and constitute an important element in the National life of the country; (3) it contained provisions which would give a sense of security to the Depressed Classes. These provisions are:

"(1) That in the budget of every Provincial Government an annual sum as may be determined upon by agreement be set apart for promoting the primary education among the children of the Scheduled Castes and another annual sum for promoting advanced education among them and such sums shall be declared to be the first charge on the revenues of the Province.

(2) The provision shall be made by law for securing representation to the Scheduled Castes in all Executive Governments, Central and Provincial, the proportion of which shall be determined in accordance with their number, their needs and their importance.

(3) That provision shall be made by law for securing representation to the Scheduled Castes in the Public services the proportion of which shall be fixed in accordance with their numbers, their needs and their importance. This conference further insists that in the case of security services such as Judiciary, Police and Revenue, provision shall be made that the proportion fixed for the Scheduled Castes shall, subject to the rule of minimum qualifications, be realized within a period of ten years.

(4) That provision shall be made by law for guaranteeing to the Scheduled Castes representation in all Legislatures and Local Bodies in accordance with their number, needs and importance.

(5) That provision shall be made by law whereby the representation of the Scheduled Castes in all Legislatures and Local Bodies be by the method of Separate Electorates.

(6) That provision shall be made by law for the representation of the Scheduled Castes on all Public Service Commissions, Central and Provincial."

The fourth resolution passed at the Nagpur Conference contains a demand for separate Depressed Classes settlements.

"It is the considered opinion of this conference,

- (a) that so long as the Scheduled Castes continue to live on the outskirts of the Hindu village, with no source of livelihood and in small number as compared to Hindus, they will continue to remain untouchables and subject to the tyranny and oppression of the Hindus and will not be able to enjoy free and full life;
- (b) that for the protection of the Scheduled Castes from the tyranny and oppression of the Caste Hindus, which may take a worse form under Swaraj, which cannot but be a Hindu Raj, and (c) to enable the Scheduled Castes to develop to their fullest manhood, to give them economical and social security as also to pave the way for the removal of untouchability.

"This conference has after long and mature deliberation come to the conclusion that a radical change must be made in the

village system now prevalent in India and which is the parent of all the ills from which the Scheduled Castes are suffering for so many centuries at the hands of the Hindus. Realizing the necessity of these changes this conference holds that along with the Constitutional changes in the system of Government there must be a change in the village system now prevalent made along the following lines:

(1) The constitution should provide for the transfer of the Scheduled Castes from their present habitation and constitute separate Scheduled Caste villages away from and independent of Hindu villages.

(2) For the settlement of the Scheduled Castes in new villages a provision shall be made by the constitution for the establishment of a settlement Commission.

(3) All Government land which is cultivable and which is not occupied shall be handed over to the Commission to be held in trust for the purpose of making new settlements of the Scheduled Castes.

(4) The Commission shall be empowered to purchase new land under the Land Acquisition Act from private owners to complete the scheme of settlement of the Scheduled Castes.

(5) The constitution shall provide that the Central Government shall grant to the Settlement Commission a minimum sum of rupees five crores [about \$15,000,000] per annum to enable the commission to carry out their duty in this behalf." 116/

It is difficult to say whether or not Ambedkar expects to have the demand for separate settlements taken at its face value. Possibly he hopes to use it as a means of winning concessions from the Hindus, as appears to have been the case with his suggestion that the untouchables abandon Hinduism and go over to another religion.

Probably of more immediate importance are his demands for special educational facilities for the Depressed Classes, and for their representation in the services. The recent memorandum to the British Government prepared by Ambedkar pressed both of these claims. Whereas the resolution passed by the Depressed Classes Conference at Nagpur demanded that the Provincial Governments make provision for special education of the Depressed Classes, Ambedkar, in his memorandum to the British Government, demands that the Central Government set aside a sum of three lakhs, two to be used for scholarships for the Scheduled Castes students in science and technology in India, one for scientific and technological education in foreign universities. It seems reasonable to suppose that the recent grant of three lakhs (\$90,000), made by the Government of India for education of the untouchables, is a response to this demand; although the type of study to be pursued is not specified, two lakhs are set aside for foreign education (see p. 24). Similarly with the demand for representation in the services: the declaration by the Government that the Depressed Classes are to be regarded as a minority for the purpose of appointments to the services probably may be regarded as a response to Ambedkar's demand (see p. 38).

Two other grievances of which Ambedkar complained to the British Government have not yet been remedied. These refer to government publicity and government contracts. Ambedkar feels that during the past years insufficient publicity has been given to the activities of the Depressed Classes and to his own speeches. His memorandum refers specifically to the government publication entitled India and the Aggressors, The Trend of Indian Opinion between 1935-40, compiled by

the Bureau of Public Information, Government of India, and suggests that the Government bring out a supplement to the volume "giving full space to movements carried on by the Scheduled Castes and the pronouncements their leaders have made." 117/

With regard to government contracts for public work, Ambedkar complains that on the list of 1,170 approved contractors maintained by the Public Works Department, there is only one belonging to the Depressed Classes. He proposes that more be put on the list and, further, that the tenders submitted by the Depressed Class contractors, if not higher than the lowest by 5 percent, shall be considered the lowest to increase their chances of being awarded the contract.

3. M.C. Rajah. Another prominent leader of the Depressed Classes is M.C. Rajah. His All-India Adi-Dravida Maha Jana Sabha was one of the earliest associations for the advancement of the Depressed Classes. In 1917 as head of this society he submitted evidence on behalf of the Depressed Classes to Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford. For many years he represented this group, first as a member of the Madras Legislative Council from 1919 to 1926, and then of the Central Legislative Assembly from 1927-37.

Rajah and Ambedkar have never worked together, and Rajah has opposed nearly all of Ambedkar's measures to improve the position of the Depressed Classes. At the Round Table Conference he defended the system of joint electorates in opposition to Ambedkar's demand for separate electorates. Shortly after this he entered into an agreement with Moonje of the Hindu Mahasabha according to which seats were to be reserved for the Depressed Classes in proportion to their numbers.

After the Congress ministry in Madras refused to consider his bill for temple entry he became distrustful of Congress policy, and has since been advocating separate electorates. He has recently gone so far in an anti-Congress direction as to champion Jinnah. At a meeting held to celebrate Jinnah's birthday in January 1940, Rajah, who presided, said "that he considered Mr. Jinnah as the benefactor of the largest number of people of India in asserting the rights of the largest minority community in the country against the aggressive policy of the Congress, which claimed to act in the name of nationalism on behalf of the majority. By so doing, Mr. Jinnah was also defending the rights of the Depressed Classes, who formed the next largest minority community in the country." 118/

Rajah's recent demand for separate electorates has not resulted in collaboration with Ambedkar. At the present time Rajah's influence is probably restricted to Madras and in national affairs he has been outstripped by Ambedkar.

V. THE FUTURE OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

The position of the Depressed Classes as a political minority appears to be already well-established. Since the indications are that this position will be strengthened rather than weakened, it is necessary to examine the possibilities for social and economic advancement by the Depressed Classes according to the methods proposed.

In the process of delimiting the Depressed Classes untouchability was taken as their distinguishing characteristic. The purpose of the delimitation was to determine what castes were entitled to special consideration and support by the Government. The conclusion may be drawn that it is the treatment suffered by the Depressed Classes at the hands of the Caste Hindus, in other words the fact of their untouchability, which qualifies this minority for special consideration. Ambedkar and other Depressed Class leaders likewise regard untouchability as the fundamental factor in the problem. The first question is, therefore, in how far the measures proposed or adopted for the welfare of the Depressed Classes will prove effective in abolishing untouchability.

Declaring the Depressed Classes a separate group for the purpose of electing members to the legislatures might conceivably induce the caste Hindus to abolish untouchability in the hope of winning their support. It is quite as likely, however, to have the opposite effect. Moreover, it is doubtful to what extent a small minority can press its demands in legislative bodies. Even in Madras, where the number of seats reserved for the Depressed Classes in proportion to the total number of seats is greater than in any other province, the Depressed Classes have only one-seventh of the seats. Furthermore, provided that acts are passed guaranteeing to the untouchables the right to enter temples, use public wells, roads, etc., the Depressed Classes are still in a poor position to take advantage of their rights in the face of adverse public opinion. It is probably safe to say that untouchability will not disappear from Indian society as a result of separate electorates.

Ambedkar has proposed separate settlements for the Depressed Classes primarily as a means of freeing them from untouchability. Segregating the Depressed Classes in villages of their own would lessen the amount of contact between them and caste Hindus, but such isolation would seem likely further to accentuate the feeling of outcaste in the minds of both caste Hindus and untouchables. Moreover, there is no reason to suppose that the Depressed Classes, though separate from the caste Hindus, would forget the caste distinctions and various degrees of untouchability that exist within their own ranks. These are quite as rigid and productive of friction as those between caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes. Even if a village was peopled solely with members of one caste it is probable that occupational groups with invidious distinctions would spring up after a generation or so.

The most reasonable answer to this first question, therefore, seems to be a negative one. Untouchability appears to be an inseparable part of the caste system as it exists in India today. It is, of course, intensified and the consequent disabilities are aggravated in the case of the Depressed Classes versus the caste Hindus. But in varying degree untouchability is characteristic of the relationship between any two castes, even though both are relatively high, or both relatively low. It is probably safe to state that only revolutionary changes in the entire caste system will abolish untouchability. There is some evidence that Ambedkar realizes this. He has criticized Gandhi for upholding the caste system; he himself wants to see caste in India abolished. Without doubt changes affecting the caste structure have taken place in recent times. These appear to be due to the conditions of modern life and the

growth of democratic ideas and institutions. There is every chance that the development of industry and increased educational facilities will result in far-reaching alterations in the entire caste structure and consequently in the practice of untouchability.

Although untouchability has been the principle criterion in the delimitation of the Depressed Classes, the label "depressed" lends itself to an interpretation in economic as well as in social terms. The economic position of the Depressed Classes has already been discussed. Obviously if the delimitation had been on the basis of poverty and general backwardness the Depressed Classes would be not a minority but the only majority in India. Although the untouchables are, therefore, only a fraction of the economically depressed classes, a lack of material advantages is characteristic of the untouchables as a group. The 1931 Census Superintendent of Bengal regarded the economic condition of the Depressed Classes as their chief claim to special recognition: "The untouchables claim the special consideration of Government not qua untouchable, and governmental responsibility for them arises not from their social and religious disabilities, but from other conditions. These conditions would remain even if untouchability were removed. If it were possible to imagine caste Hindu society undergoing a universal change of heart and effectively admitting untouchables to all the privileges which are now denied them on religious grounds, they would still remain in poverty and ignorance and both their conditions of life and their mental outlook would still be deplorable. If every untouchable were forthwith invested with the sacred thread and given the status of a Brahman it would be a very long time before the class unaided could derive any benefit from its elevation. A spectacular removal of untouchability, if it were effective, would still leave the ex-untouchables in conditions entitling them to special consideration." 119/

It is necessary to consider in how far it is possible for the Depressed Classes to obtain economic advantages by the means proposed. It seems likely that the Depressed Classes have already profited and will continue to do so from their position as a separate group. Special funds have been set aside for the education of Depressed Class children by provincial governments and the Central Government. In several provinces land grants have been made. Recently the Government of India has declared that the Depressed Classes will receive a share of appointments to government service, and the economic status of at least a few members of the group will be improved thereby.

In the absence of any detailed information regarding Ambedkar's ideas for separate settlements it is impossible to do more than point to the fact that economically his plan represents merely a systematic extension of the policy of making land-grants already adopted in several provinces. It is doubtful whether this represents the ideal or even the best possible solution to the Depressed Classes' problem of poverty.

The position of the Depressed Classes as a political minority is already established. Ambedkar, who has demanded a separate electorate, wishes the line of separation to be even more clearly defined. It is not necessary here to consider whether or not the division of the population into various groups makes for the welfare and efficient government of India as a whole. But the question remains: Will the Depressed Classes benefit from their position as a minority group?

The answer seems to be that they will benefit economically to a certain extent and for a limited time. In so far as a rise in social status follows economic improvement, the Depressed Classes will also benefit socially. On the other hand, there are disadvantages inherent in the minority system for the minority itself. M.N. Dalal has called attention to one danger of a separate electorate for the group concerned: "Once separate electorates are established...the

separate representation thus assured will tend to become the maximum the community thus safeguarded can hope to obtain. It will, therefore, reflect the maximum of their strength in the legislature, and through that, in all departments of government that the legislature can influence. This means not only a fixed maximum share in the services, but also in all other economic advantages, which influence in government through the legislatures. There can be no hope for more than this fixed share." 120/

Above all, the separation of the Depressed Classes from the general population means that they are cut off from those groups with which they have common interests, namely the agriculturalists and industrial workers. Separate electorates would mean that a Depressed Class worker in a Bombay factory would vote not as a worker but as a member of the Depressed Classes; he would vote for a representative of his interests as an untouchable rather than as a worker. Since the future welfare of the Depressed Classes is obviously bound up with that of the rest of the Indian population, particularly with that of the peasants and workers, there is a danger that a separate electorate will defeat the ends envisaged by the Depressed Class leaders.

THE DEPRESSED CLASSES OF INDIA

FOOTNOTES

1. Discussion which follows is based on G.S. Ghurye, Caste and Race in India (London 1932).
2. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 17: Punjab, pt. 1, p. 373.
3. Ibid., loc. cit.
4. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 5: Bengal, pt. I, pp. 496-97.
5. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 18: United Provinces, pt. I, p. 627.
6. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1: India, pt. I, p. 486.
7. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 5: Bengal, pt. I, p. 499.
8. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 3: Assam, pt. I, p. 210.
9. L.S.S. O'Malley, India's Social Heritage (Oxford 1934), p. 46.
10. University of Madras Economic Studies, Vol. 1: Some South Indian Villages, Gilbert Slater, Ed. (London 1918), p. 11.
11. A General Report on the Condition of the Slums of Madras, Madras Sanitary Welfare League, 1933, pp. 4, 5; quoted by C.W. Ranson, A City in Transition (Madras 1938), p. 116.
12. University of Madras Economic Studies, Vol. I, Some South Indian Villages, op. cit., pp. 125-6. Prices as of 1916-17.
13. Cf. M.L. Darling, Wisdom and Waste in the Punjab Village (London 1934), p. 277. Prices as of 1930-31.
14. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 10: Memorandum submitted by the Government of the Punjab (London 1930), p. 9.
15. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 18: United Provinces, pp. 629-630.
16. A.T. Fishman, Culture Change and the Underprivileged (Madras 1941), p. 142.
17. Report on an Inquiry into Working-Class Family Budgets in Bombay City, prepared by the Labour Office, Bombay (Bombay 1935), p. 3.
18. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 16, Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non-Officials (London 1930), pt. 1, pp. 56-57.
19. Royal Commission on Labour in India (London 1931), vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 15.
20. Ibid., vol. 7, pt. 1, p. 78.
21. Cf. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 17, Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence (London 1930), p. 277.
22. Cf. R. Suryanarayana Rao, "House Sites for the Depressed Classes," Servant of India, vol. 19 (1936), p. 190.
23. Madras Administration 1937-38 (Madras 1939), p. 141.

24. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 21, Cochin, p. 293.
25. Madras Administration, op. cit., p. 142.
26. The material which follows is contained in a report from New Delhi in answer to certain questions submitted to the Office of the Personal Representative of the President of the United States. It is dated December 16, 1942.
- 26-a. See 26.
27. Madras Administration, op. cit., p. 66.
- 27-a. See 26.
28. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 14: Madras, p. 344.
29. Cf. L.S.S. O'Malley, op. cit., p. 47.
30. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. I, Survey, p. 396.
31. This figure is perhaps too high. In the Census of India, 1931, Vol. 18: United Provinces, p. 461, a statement, made by the Director of Public Instruction in the United Provinces Legislative Council, is quoted to the effect that 25,000 pupils from the Depressed Classes attended special schools, 88,000 ordinary schools.
32. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 8: Memorandum Submitted by the Government of Bengal, p. 55.
33. Pickett, J.W., Christian Mass Movements in India (New York 1935), p. 74.
34. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 16, Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non-Officials, pt. 1, p. 43.
35. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 1: Survey p. 396.
- 35-a. Figures taken from the Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1, p. 331.
36. Table compiled from figures given in the Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1, pp. 335, 336.
37. Report on Public Instruction in the Bombay Presidency, 1935-36 (Bombay 1937), p. 132.
38. J.W. Pickett, Christian Mass Movements in India (New York 1933), p. 83-84.
39. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 17, Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non-Officials, pt. 2, pp. 277-278.
40. Cf. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1, p. 483.
41. L.S.S. O'Malley, Indian Caste Customs (Cambridge 1932); p. 152.
42. Report on Public Instruction in the Bombay Presidency, 1935-36 (Bombay 1937), p. 133.
43. Madras Administration, op. cit., p. 142.
44. Madras in 1938 (Madras 1939), p. 65.

45. Capital, CIX, no. 2737, December 17, 1942. Calcutta.
46. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 7: Bihar and Orissa, p. 263.
47. Sir Edward Blunt (ed.), Social Service in India (London 1938), p. 81.
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- 48-a. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 23: Hyderabad, p. 258.
49. M.T. Titus, Indian Islam (London 1930), p. 50.
50. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 14: Madras, p. 321.
51. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 17: Punjab, p. 306.
- 51-a. Ibid., p. 308.
52. M.T. Titus, op. cit., p. 168.
53. L.S.S. O'Malley, India's Social Heritage, p. 42.
54. Cf. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 17: Punjab, p. 309.
55. Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1: India, p. 380.
- 55-a. A.T. Fishman, Culture Change and the Underprivileged (Madras 1941), p. 162.
56. Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. 12; Memorandum Submitted by the Government of Bihar and Orissa, p. 103.
57. Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee 1924 (Calcutta 1925), p. 180.
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59. Ibid., Vol. 12, Memorandum Submitted by the Government of Bihar and Orissa, p. 104.
60. Ibid., Vol. 6, Memorandum Submitted by the Government of Madras, p. 9.
61. Ibid., Vol. 10; Memorandum Submitted by the Government of the Punjab, p. 44.
62. Ibid., Vol. 16: Selections from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by Non-Officials, pt. 1, p. 352.
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64. Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, vol. 2, p. 65.
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